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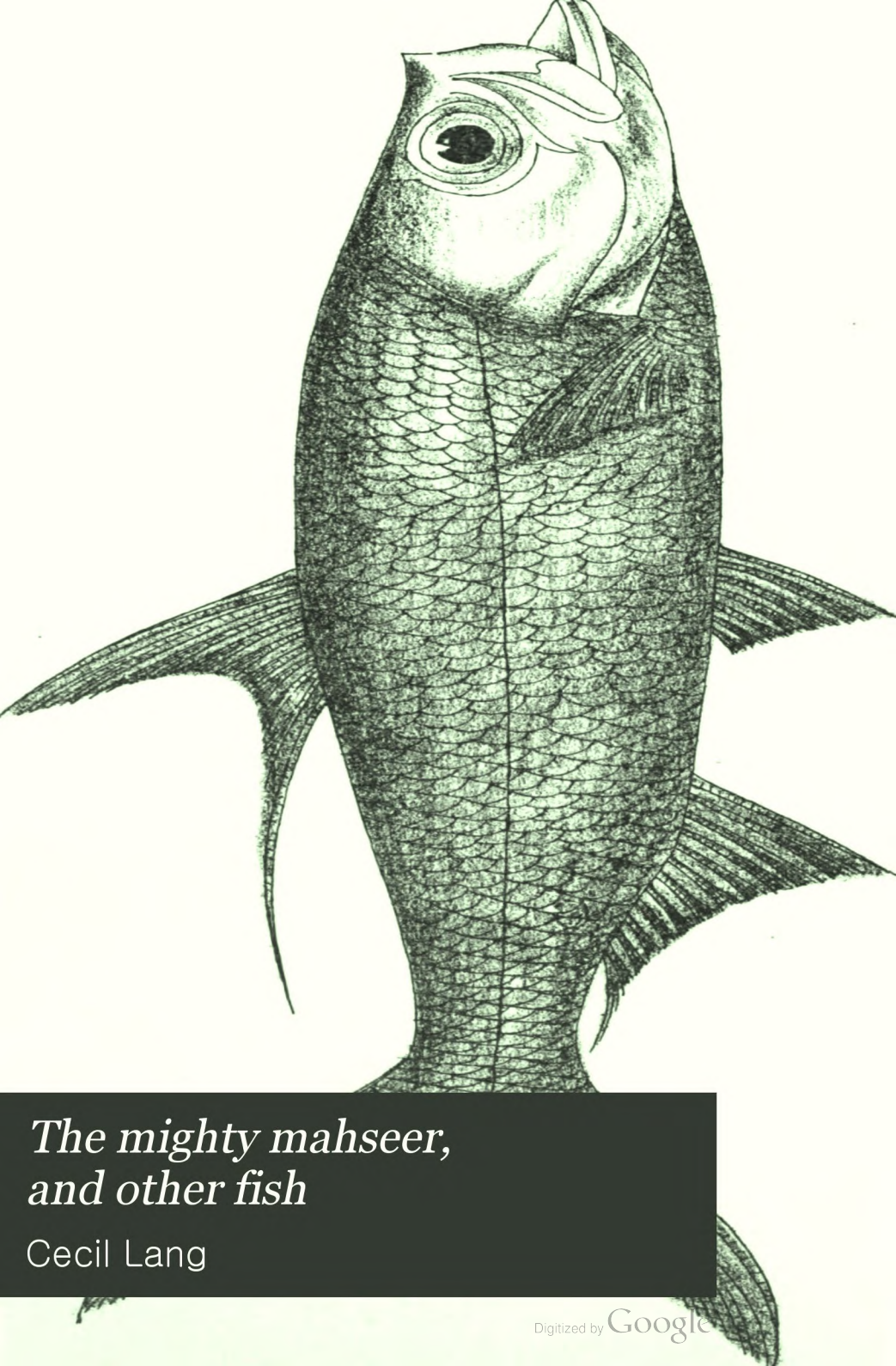

The mighty mahseer, and other fish

Cecil Lang

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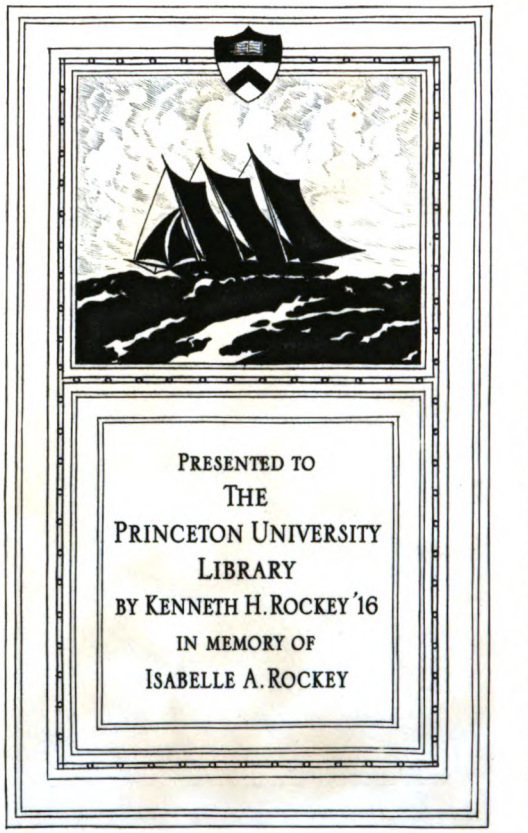

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Cecil Lang.

Reginald Schomberg.
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Nasirabad. Nov. '04.

THE MIGHTY MAHSEER

AND

OTHER FISH;

OR

HINTS TO BEGINNERS ON INDIAN FISHING.

BY

SKENE-DHU, pseud.

Madras:
HIGGINBOTHAM & CO.
1903.

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Dedicated

To My Wife

THAN WHOM,

FOR A FISHING TRIP,

NO MAN COULD WISH FOR A

KEENER AND PLEASANTER COMPANION.

S. D.

(RECAP)
Robert
4222
562
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PREFACE.

I MUST commence by offering my humblest apologies to a confiding public. My excuse is that I have waited long and patiently for some abler pen than mine to undertake this task, but my waiting has been in vain. Books on fishing—their name is legion; but of books on Indian fishing there are hardly any. The best undoubtedly are Mr. H. S. Thomas's two excellent books: "The Rod in India" and "Tank Angling," and to these two books I would recommend everyone to turn who wants much pleasant reading and real instruction on our Indian fish. There is also the "North Punjaub Fishing Club Anglers' Handbook," a most invaluable treatise to any fishermen going to the Punjaub, and useful also to any angler in India.

The above three books should be in every Indian fisherman's library. But of the small and cheap books on angling which are so numerous, and so helpful to the novice at home, out here there are none.

Well, this little book does not profess to be an exhaustive treatise on Indian fishing, nor is it perhaps technically very accurate; it is simply composed from a few notes made by the author and his friends, and its object is

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to tell the newcomer in India about some of the fish there are that he is likely to meet with, and how to set about catching them. No doubt many experienced anglers will condemn this small book as sketchy or not lucid enough ; my advice then to young sportsmen will be, after having read this book, and we will hope, had their keenness aroused, to go to some of these critics and get from them a few practical hints both on fishing, and on local conditions, remembering that an oz. of practice is worth several lbs. of theory.

In view of the possible, though improbable, contingency of this little book reaching a second edition, the author would be very much obliged to brother anglers if they would write to him (through the publishers) pointing out any errors that they think needful of correction. Also any articles on local fishing, or on fish not included in this book, would be accepted with pleasure and inserted in a 2nd edition, if within the scope of this small work. And, in conclusion, I should like to add that the illustrations do not lay claim to any great technical accuracy ; they are mostly from rough sketches made by the author, while others are copies of stuffed fish or plates in the Madras Museum.

SKENE-DHU.

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ERRATA.

Page 12, line 10, *instead of* "stout trout or light salmon gut", *read* "stout or light salmon gut."

Page 34, line 20, *for* "1 lb" *read* "3 lb."

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CHAPTER I.

ON SPORT GENERALLY AND FISHING IN PARTICULAR.

OUT of all the young men who come to India for the first time how many bring out a rod? Almost all bring out guns or rifles with keen ideas of the sport to be their's when first they get leave, but for every twenty that bring out a gun, perhaps only one brings out a rod. And yet many of these men were keen enough fishermen at home. With some, it is the idea that having tasted the joys of salmon or trout fishing at home, there can be nothing here worthy of their skill. With others it is mere ignorance. No one has told them of the fine fish to be caught, while many have told them varied and exciting tales of tigers, bison and deer, and of the joys of pig-sticking. Personally I have been lucky enough to have had experience of most of the above sports, and—well comparisons are odious. There is a wild joy in being on a good horse, with a game old boar in front, and one lives a lifetime during that stern chase, and then that glorious moment when after many jinks and escapes, yours, the first spear,

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goes well home, in a foe who is truly worthy of your steel.

Then again is the moment of pure and holy joy that steals over one, when after following the tracks of a bison through dense jungle for the better part of the day, suddenly the old solitary bull appears before one, head in air sniffing the breeze and suspicious of danger, but not knowing where to look for it. Then your rifle rings out, he falls, rises again, and once more goes down to your second barrel, and a minute after you are admiring the massive frame, and splendid proportions, of perhaps the finest animal India has to offer in the way of "big game."

But there is a joy of another sort, not to be beaten in pleasure and excitement by either of the foregoing two, and a joy that has this added recommendation—you may feel it several times in one day. And that is the joy of running a big fish. There are few keen anglers out here who have not experienced the delightful thrill which comes, when after half a dozen blank casts in a promising looking rapid, there comes that sudden tautening of the line, and a second after "the bend of the rod and the scream of the reel" tells him he is into a real good fish. There is a thrill in that feeling unsurpassed in any other sport.

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And then there is a charm in the scenery, which adds a great deal to one's enjoyment. The never-ceasing roar of the rapid, the cool splash of the water, and the vast solitude of the jungle all around you; verily a man must be hard to please if he does not appreciate the calm and peace of nature which comes as such a welcome change, after the hurry and bustle of life in a big Indian cantonment. But even for those who cannot get to the haunts of the mighty Mahseer, and his lesser brothers, very good fun may be had in the tanks which abound in some parts of India, notably in parts of Bengal, and the southern parts of the Madras Presidency. In the North one gets the Mirga and the Rohu, in the South the White Carp and the Labeo, while the Murral and Wallago Attu are common to both. And there is a charm about float fishing too, though one is very prone to despise it. Who can deny a slight quickening of the pulse, when, after watching an immovable float for perhaps twenty minutes, it suddenly gives a few quick bobs, and disappears from your sight. But alas it is not often that you will get such good honest biting from an Indian fish. But this subject we will treat of more fully later on; in the chapter devoted to these fish.

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CHAPTER II.

TABLE OF FISH MENTIONED.

IN this chapter I will enumerate briefly the fishes dealt with in the following pages, giving the distribution and sizes.

THE MAHSEER (Barbus Tor).

Found generally throughout India and Burmah, running up to 200 lbs. in weight.

THE CARNATIC CARP (Barbus Carnaticus).

Found in the rivers of Wynaad, Canara, Mysore and other Southern States; also in W. Dooars. Attains 25 lbs. in weight.

BARILS.

Of the genus Barilius there are some 14 different species in India. Most of them run only to about 6 inches in length. However one, "Barilius Bola," the Indian trout, attains one foot in length.

THE BLACK SPOT (Barbus Mahecola).

Found in Southern India, runs to six inches in length.

THE CHILWA (or Chela).

There are some ten species of this fish distributed through India. They run from six to nine inches in length.

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BUTCHWA (Pseudeutropius Garua).

North India generally; runs to two feet in length.

MEGALOPS CYPRINOIDES.

Throughout India; runs up to two feet in length.

THE MURRAL (Ophiocephalus Striatus).

Found throughout India and Burmah, attaining three feet in length.

WALLAGO ATTU.

Found throughout India and Burmah, attaining six feet in length.

BAGARIUS YARELLII (Goonch).

Found throughout India and Burmah, attaining six feet in length.

SILUNDIA GANGETICA.

Found throughout India and Burmah, attaining six feet in length.

LABEO (Labeo Calbasu).

Found in rivers and tanks throughout Southern India, and attains three feet in length.

ROHU (Labeo Rohita).

Found in rivers and tanks throughout Northern India and Burmah, and attains three feet in length.

MIRGA (Cirrhina Mrigala).

Found in rivers and tanks of Northern

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India and Burmah, and attains three feet in length.

WHITE CARP (Cirrhina Cirrhosa).

Found in rivers and tanks of Southern India, and attains one and a-half foot in length.

OLIVE CARP (Barbus Chrysopoma).

Found in rivers and tanks of Central and Southern India, and attains about one and a-half foot in length.

NOTOPTERUS KAPIRAT.

Found throughout India and grows to two feet in length.

NOTOPTERUS CHITALA (Seetul).

Found generally in Northern India, and attains four feet in length.

INDIAN GUDGEON (Gobius giuris).

Found throughout India and Burmah, and grows to one and a-half foot in length.

ETROPLUS SURATENSIS.

Found in Central India and Ceylon; runs up to two lbs. in weight.

BAMIN (Polynemus tetradactylus).

Habitat—Seas of India, ascending estuaries in search of food; attains 25 lbs. in weight.

NAIR FISH (Lates Calcarifer).

Found in Seas and estuaries of India, and runs to over 60 lbs. in weight.

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CHAPTER III.

A FEW GENERAL LOCALITIES.

THE following is but a very brief summary compiled only from the knowledge of the author and friends, and just shows a few rivers, etc., in which the new-comer can count upon catching fish. Actual places, local conditions, etc., etc., he must learn from friends; or a letter to the ever-courteous Editor of the *Asian* would probably bring him in the information required.

In Northern India—The Giri, Poonch, Jhelum, Sone, Betwa, Chambal, Beylum, Dessaun, Teesta, Mahl, Rawul, Ravi, Runjeet and Brahmaputra rivers, the Ganges and Jumna canals, also innumerable tanks in the plains hold rohu, freshwater shark, etc.

In Central India—The Nerbudda, Tapti, Sabermati, Muta-Mula, Indryani, Godaveri, Banas, and many other rivers, and the Kharakwasla lake at Poona.

In Southern India—The Cavery, Cubbany, Bhawany, Tungabadhra, Hemavutti, Netravutty rivers. Also the estuaries and backwaters on the West Coast.

And around Madras, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, etc., are innumerable tanks, several of which

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(when not netted to death) hold labeo, white carp, freshwater shark, etc.

Burmah—The Irrawaddy, Salwin, Chindwin and their tributaries; the Darrung river and others.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE MAHSEER (Barbus Tor).

THE Mahseer—what a name to conjure with, and what recollections he awakes in the hearts of those who have been so fortunate as to have seen something of him.

Was it not Dr. Johnson who defined fishing as "a stick and line, with a fool at one end, and a worm at the other"? Well let scoffers think so. As a fisherman and an Englishman, however, one is always taught to believe, that given yourself at one end of the rod and a salmon at the other, the summit of human bliss is reached. But not quite, O my reader. I know it is rank heresy to say so, but substitute Mahseer for Salmon and then you have the acme of human bliss. It is, I know, a much disputed subject, but given weight for weight, I think that the Mahseer is the finer fish.

But you will say all these rhapsodies are out of place, and that all you want is to know where to look for the fish and how to catch them.

In almost every perennial river in India of fair size you will find Mahseer; you will not,

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however, find them, except very seldom, in the rivers where they debouch into the plains, and run in broad sandy beds, but anywhere where there are rocks and runs and a fair amount of water, there will you find the Mahseer.

I do not intend to differentiate between the many sorts of Mahseer nor their variations, that we can safely leave to Naturalists.

The Mahseer is a carp, tho' he bears about as much resemblance to our degenerate English carp, as the latter does to the gold fish in an aquarium.

Mahseer may be fished for both in the rapids and in the pools, the latter tho' they yield generally the heavier fish, are more difficult to fish, both because a boat is necessary to do justice to them, and because owing to the clearness of Indian waters, the fish are more likely to see you and become shy.

One thing you must remember wherein English and Indian fishing differs. At home a mild spate and coloured water rouses joy in your heart. In India the clearer the water the better your fishing. It is quite useless to try spinning for Mahseer when the water is at all coloured.

Next as to lure. The Mahseer is not, unfortunately, a good fly-taker, though take fly he will, and very well at times.

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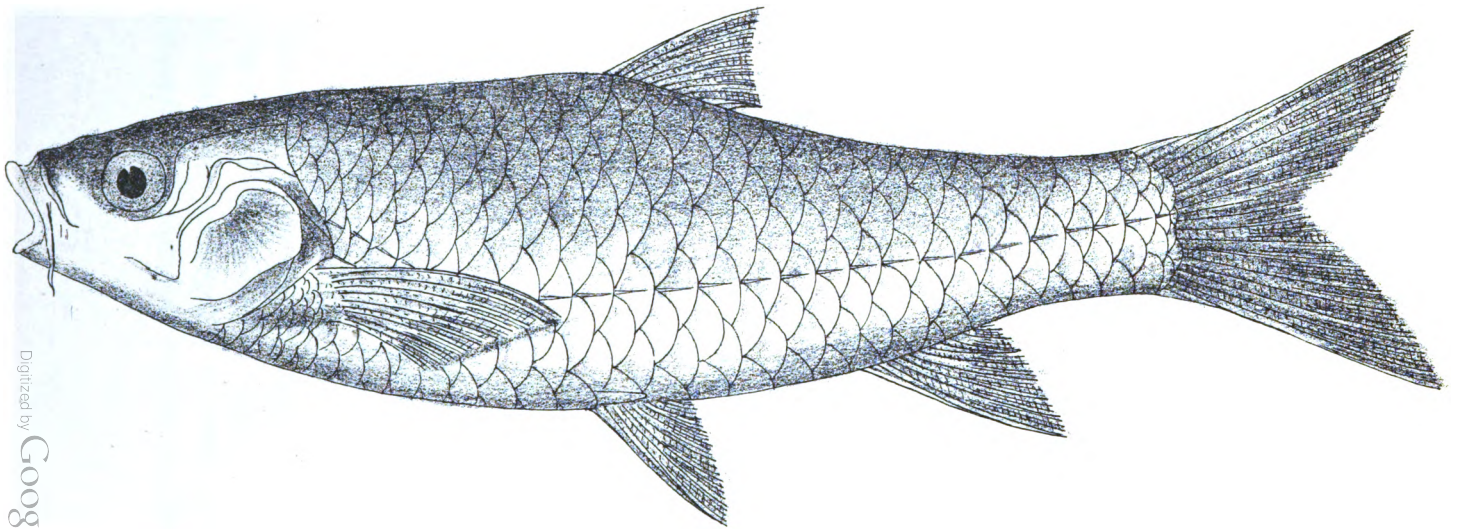

THE MAHSEER.

Plate I.

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But the lure *par excellence* for the novice, and one easy to use and to procure, and a bait always clean, is the spoon. A good size (if you are fishing for ordinary sized fish, say 1-10 lbs.) is a 1½ or 2 inch spoon, gilt one side and silver the other, with one treble hook at tail and one at top. There is no rule as to this, some prefer bigger spoons, some smaller, some like one treble, some a flight of two; nothing but experience will teach you, and the author only quotes what he has found most successful in the majority of cases.

A small dead fish about four inches long is also an excellent bait though it is less easy to throw than a spoon, and then there is the trouble of preparing it, and the fact that it comes to pieces very quickly. Phantoms and Spinning Minnows do good execution occasionally, though if the beginner will confine himself to a spoon-bait at first, he will find it probably more satisfactory.

Then as to rods, opinions differ, some like 14 feet, others 16 feet, and some even an 18-foot rod, though I must say the latter is making a business of a pleasure. If a beginner will content himself with a good greenheart 14-foot rod, he will, I think, find it suits him all right. In India a light rod is a great consideration, as regards pleasure in your fishing,

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as, when you fish sometimes for hours in a broiling sun, you find every oz. of weight in your rod a consideration. And a 14-foot rod will cover enough water in nine cases out of ten, and will allow of your using a lighter reel and line.

Then a word as to your trace; if you are using a 14-foot rod with a light fly top, I have always found a two yards trace of stout trout, or light salmon gut, fitted with two swivels, about the best thing to use. If fishing in rapid rocky water in which big fish may be expected, a very excellent trace to use is one made of Hercules rust-proof wire. These traces are immensely strong, not easily cut by rock, and are very little more visible than gut, when the water is at all broken. It is as well to remember to have the spoon on a snood of the same material as your trace. Then a good stout landing net and a gaff, and you are ready to proceed to the river. There is no real need for a gaff or net, unless you are fishing from a boat, as the native is exceeding dexterous at bringing out your fish, if you have played him, exhausted, into shallow water. Next having fitted up your rod and mounted your spoon, choose a likely looking spot to commence. First let me caution you in one thing, a fish has eyes! This is a

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point very often overlooked by a novice, whose general procedure is to stroll up to the bank, and having selected a prominent position on some rock perhaps, proceeds to survey the water. Then taking his rod, he starts dropping his spoon in likely spots.

Well he does catch a fish occasionally, as there are fools among fish, luckily; but still I would recommend a different plan to you, my reader. Look upon the fishes in the water you mean to fish as a herd of black buck, and, as such, to be stalked with care. Say you have selected a nice looking rapid to commence with, note the lie of the water from some little way off, and then approach carefully, just near enough to drop your spoon gently over the edge. And remember another thing, good fish may be, and probably are, lying in those nice little eddies, and backwaters just close under your own bank. Do not be seized with that marvellously universal longing to get at the eddies just under the other bank.

Remember again the fishes have eyes, and they are in their own natural element, and it cannot make them think your bait more seductive when they see a wildly waving 14-foot rod and two arms up against the blue sky overhead. But in a good rapid when the

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water is well broken up, the odds are not so much against you after all, as it stands to reason a fish cannot see so clearly then, as through still water.

So after trying the water under your own bank move up carefully and slowly and commence trying the centre and opposite backwaters. Another thing to remember is that "movement is life" and it is movement that frightens animals.

I remember once sitting so still in a beat that a small jungle sheep came out, and stepped gingerly over one of my legs, which was lying rather outside the shadow of the bush under which I was sitting.

And you can try for yourself how movement affects fishes. Creep up very slowly to the edge of a bank overlooking a small pool, and you will see the small fishes and fry moving about quite unsuspiciously, but move your hand suddenly and sharply and see the result. Like lightning the little fish will scatter and vanish. So remember the quieter you are and less motion that you make in casting, the less likely will be the big fish in the depths below to see you and take fright.

One thing that you will have learnt at home with trout fishing, and which you will do well to bear in mind, and that is the fact that

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fish almost invariably lie with their heads up-stream (waiting for food to be brought down to them by the current). At home one is taught that the best way with a fly is to throw up-stream and let the water bring it back towards one, keeping one's line taut the while, but while this is an excellent thing for trout in England, I would advise the beginner in Indian waters to try a different plan when using spoon or minnow. In India the rapids are deeper and generally run with far greater velocity than any water one would fish in at home.

And remember when you are using a spoon (which by-the-way is meant to represent a small fish), phantom or dead-bait, you are trying to present to the fish his own natural food, tendered in such a way that he may take it without suspicion. If you threw your bait in up-stream, think what the result would be, it would come rolling and rushing back to you, probably mixed up with some of the trace, just as unlike the action of a little fish as it possibly could be.

Well, the way that seems to meet with the most universal success is to start at the foot and fish a rapid up all its length.

We will assume that you have approached carefully and are near enough to command

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the water comfortably. Then having got out the right amount of line, drop your spoon just the other side of the main stream and a little up-stream, and keeping a taut line, let your bait swing round with the current, and pull it gently up through the eddies just out of the main current.

Another way of fishing a rapid which is very often successful, and which the novice will perhaps prefer, as it is certainly easier than the more scientific way, is to stand at the head of a rapid, and having dropped your spoon into the current, to pay out line allowing the spoon to drift down-stream.

When you have let out as much line as you can fairly command, start to wind in, bringing the spoon along through the eddies at the edge of the rapid. And do not avoid the white water in the rapids; you need not fear that any current is too swift for the Mahseer; and fish the rapid all its length right down and into the pool.

And do take heed to one point, it is one that you are sure to learn by painful experience, and that is—in Mahseer fishing more than any other—"be ready," see that your line is always running clear on the reel, and that you have no kinks that might foul a ring.

A Mahseer does not take your bait with a

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gentle tug or two like a trout; generally he takes it with a rush, and before you know you've hooked him your rod is bent and reel screaming merrily. Then woe betide you, if your line has taken a hitch round the handle of your reel, or fouls in any other way.

If the fish is of any size and wants line, you must give him all he wants, if you don't, then good-bye to rod, line, or trace.

If you see a hitch is imminent or unavoidable, then don't hesitate an instant, but lower your rod, and in nine cases out of ten the break will occur in the snood* which is usually more worn than trace or line, and you thereby minimise your loss of tackle.

It is in this first glorious rush that the cream of the sport with Mahseer fishing lies. As yard after yard of line reels out, your heart rises, and you feel the fish going up and up in weight, in your estimation. Though I said before give him all the line he wants, don't take this to mean, give it to him ungrudgingly. If your tackle is good and you feel fairly sure of it, bear on him every ounce you dare, and as soon as ever his first rush is over, reel in as soon as possible, and do not give him any time to think or rest. Be careful winding

* The snood is the length of gut to which the fly or spoon is attached.

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up to keep all clear as before, as directly the fish sees you, he will be off again on another rush, keep him at it all you can, give him no time to think out matters, or you will be having him fouling your line round rocks, or up to some other tricks.

And a word as to that much debated point, "to strike or not to strike." There is much said and argued on both sides. And if you can really successfully solve this point, you will as the babu said "Have cracked the Gordian Nut." Personally I do not believe in striking with a Mahseer. He has a leathery mouth that affords a good hookhold, and he is a heavy and game fish. If his own weight and struggles have not hooked him, then I think you run a great risk by slackening your line ever so little, and slacken you must if you want to strike. With a pliable top, acting as a cushion to any jerks and jars, it is possible to even land a fish without the hook having penetrated to the barb. Of course this seldom happens, but if you had slackened for an instant, and that fish was wide awake, in that second he would have taken his opportunity to get rid of your hook. While if you had maintained a steady pressure, the chances are that the hook might have worked its way in, owing to the weight of the fish.

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And now having finished with the rapid, let us try the pool below; for this a boat will be necessary. Let us assume you have a folding boat of your own, or better still a native coracle with its owner to work it. As the boat gliding over the water naturally scares the fish temporarily it is necessary to have out a good long line. Put on a slightly bigger spoon, say 2½ to 3 inches, and about two feet from the spoon fix on about 3 ozs. of lead—the weight depending on the depth you wish to fish at. Remember a point that perhaps I should have mentioned before—that a Mahseer is a bottom feeder, so fish pretty deep, not too deep, as a bait dragging along the bottom is not so easily seen by many fish, as is one, four or five feet up. Then start the boat slowly down the pool, paying out line, till you have some forty or fifty yards out. Keep going just fast enough to make the spoon spin naturally; and when you have worked down one side, come back up the centre, and then down the other side.

When you have struck a fish, remember he will probably make for the deepest part of the pool, bear on him all you can, and mind he does not make a dash under the boat.

If you can be landed easily, it is a good

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plan to get ashore to play your fish from there, as then you have more command over your line and will find the fish easier to bring to bag.

Above all things, when playing a fish from a boat, do not bring him alongside till you have got him absolutely done up, as it is no easy matter with gaff or net to get a heavy fish into a small and shaky boat.

Now a word as to fly fishing for Mahseer. I expect with most of my readers that fly fishing was one of their first loves, and it is hard to give up first loves in a hurry, isn't it? Well, Mahseer do take fly well at times—though it is generally only the smaller ones that one can expect to catch with fly. But you must find them in the humour for it, like the trout at home; but then, unlike trout, unfortunately the humour does not take the Mahseer so often. One advantage the fly fisher for Mahseer has, especially if he is fishing on one of the big southern rivers, and that is, he has the chance of catching other carps as well, particularly our friend of the next chapter, and so making a mixed bag.

And next as to colour and size of fly. Though I have known men out here use all sorts and sizes of salmon fly, the general concensus of opinion is, I think, that a fly with

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a lot of black or peacock harl in it is the best. Why, I do not know, except that the Mahseer is not particularly partial to a fly diet, I fancy, and he takes your dark fly under the impression that it is a juicy tadpole, or some other such delectable morsel.

Then as to size. Any size between 2 to 6 Limerick scale (*see* chapter on Tackle for caution *re* sizes) will do, always remembering that with the smaller sizes you have a better chance of taking some of the smaller-mouthed carps, whose acquaintance you seldom make while fishing with spoon or phantom.

When fishing for Mahseer, it is best to use only one fly, the tail fly, though if fishing for Carnatic carp it is usual to mount two, the tail fly and then a drop fly about three feet from it. And remember do not pull your fly too fast, it is not wanted to spin like a spoon bait, and lots of fish won't bother themselves to hustle after a fly which a neighbour may devour before they can reach it.

It is outside the scope of this humble volume to enter into details of various local devices for catching fish; such as fishing with gram for Mahseer on the Nerbudda, etc. Anyone ordered to such a station as Jubbulpore would soon find some mentor kind enough to initiate

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him into all the mysteries attendant on such fishing.

But one thing I will add before parting with the hero of this chapter, and that is a few words on live-baiting for Mahseer. They may some day, dear reader, help to deter you for serious thoughts of committing suicide with your own gaff.

I don't know how many fisherman there may be, but assuredly there must be several, who have felt the utter misery and blankness of soul that comes, after anticipating, perhaps for weeks, a projected ten days' trip after Mahseer, when they arrive at the river and find the water like pea-soup. This should not occur if one has chosen one's time rightly, but it may occur sometimes through untoward circumstances, such as sudden storms in the hills, or early falls and sudden meltings of the snows up in the higher ranges; and then ten days' leave gives one all too brief a period of fishing for one to sit in patience and wait for the river to clear. So the only thing to do is to make the best of it. It is very, very sad, but you may get some good fun, and catch big fish too, live-baiting. Take any small fishes up to $\frac{1}{3}$ lb. in weight. Generally some local fisherman with a cast or two of his net will catch several of these for you. When caught

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put them in a common earthen chatty, half full of water, with a few holes bored just above the water line. Then cover the top with a big leaf or stone, or better still a piece of mosquito curtain over the top will save the necessity for the holes. This latter precaution is very necessary, as some species of fish would spend their whole time jumping out.

We will assume that you have your tackle ready (*see* Chapter XII for making up a live-bait flight). Take your small fish, treating him gently, and lay your single tail hook along his side parallel to his length, point of hook just above the anal fin, and eye of hook towards his tail. Then gently pass the point under the skin, bringing the shank of the hook in a semi-circle up perpendicular to the back, and then down till the eye lies towards the fish's head; then pull the point through. It will now be lying beneath the dorsal fin; pointing towards the head. (All this sounds complicated, but if practised once or twice on a dead fish, its simpleness will become apparent.) Then adjust your top hook so that the fish will not be curved at all, and pass it through the upper lip. Now about two feet away from the fish fasten a two-oz. weight —this is to anchor the fish to the bottom—

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and then drop your weight and fish in a rapid, in one of the eddies just off the main current. It is a very good plan to fasten on your weight with a thread or thin piece of gut, and then should it catch in a rock, you do not risk losing your collar and flight; the bait itself will usually steer clear of rocks. Then fasten your rod on the bank, with the reel running free, and proceed to set another rod and line.

Once you have got your fish on, play him just as you would under ordinary circumstances. This way of fishing strikes one as rather a poaching dodge, and is really only excusable, in my opinion, when the water is so coloured as to preclude the use of the ordinary lures. But though almost every man you ask will tell you that fishing in coloured water is quite hopeless, it is sometimes just worth the trying. I remember one day in Central India, having ridden fifteen miles in a broiling sun to see a pool in a river, that a village shikarri assured me held "plenty big fish." On arrival my heart sank, as all I saw was a large pool, perhaps 400 yards long by 40 broad, in a wide sandy channel, and the water in it was so thick, that I could not see the bottom in two feet of water. I almost felt, in my disgust, like returning there and then, but

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my guide begged me just to try for half-an-hour. Well I put on a very bright spoon, about 1½ inches, and wading in over my knees, I started. My third cast I was into and duly landed a 1-lb. Mahseer, to my own astonishment and the local shikarri's intense relief. Well, I continued with far greater keenness, and in under two hours had landed, all with the spoon, 13 Mahseer, 1 Murral and 1 Rohu, total weight 28 lbs., also one small Wallago Attu. So it is worth trying sometimes, though very seldom, I fear.

Just a last word. I see that I have omitted to mention the time to fish. Well, any time from 7 to 11 a.m., and 3 p.m. till dusk. Between 11 and 3 o'clock the fish do not seem to run so well, and after all one is but human, and a rest is a good thing. Besides that, time is required for that delightful occupation of overhauling and doing up your tackle, preparatory to conquests new.

I'm sorry if I have been too prosy, dear reader, but even if you do not agree with all my sentiments herein expressed, you will agree with me in one thing, and that is that the Mahseer is a fascinating foe.

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CHAPTER V.

BARBUS CARNATICUS (The Carnatic Carp).

HERE is another friend, whose acquaintance I'm sure you will be delighted to make. The only fault to be found with him is that he confines himself—as far as I know—to the rivers of Southern India, though I have also heard of him being caught in the Western Dooars. His chief claim to our friendship is the fact that he takes the fly and that most gamely.

Though Dr. Day states that he runs up to 25 lbs. in weight, you will be very lucky if you ever see one bigger than 7 or 8 lbs., and very seldom will you hook them of that size, the usual sizes you will get being 1 to 5 lbs.

He is very like a Mahseer, and in fact is frequently mistaken for one, but the smallness of his mouth compared with that of Barbus Tor will at once convince one of the error.

My own knowledge of this fish is confined only to the big rivers at the foot of the Neilgherries and to the rivers of Mysore.

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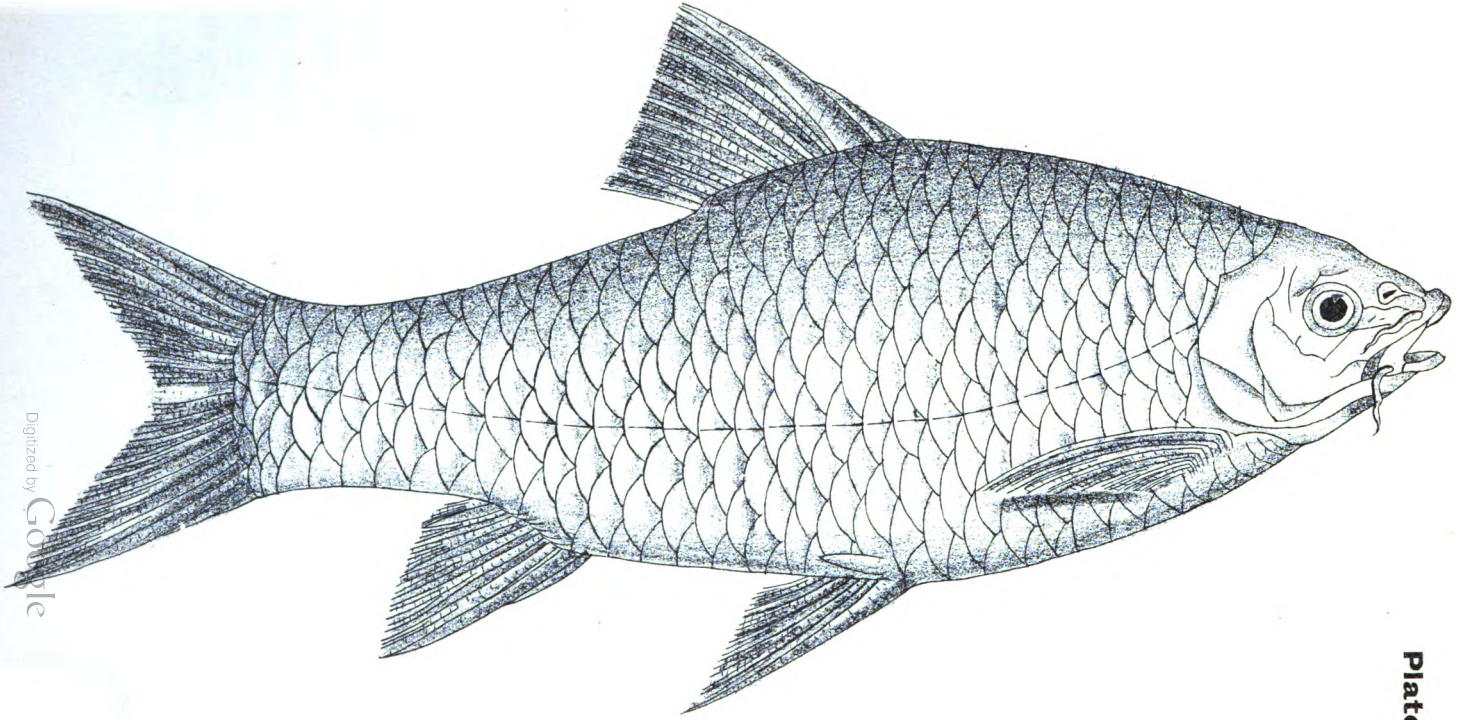

THE CARNATIC CARP.

Plate II.

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Here in the pools, in the backwaters of the rapids, and sometimes even the rough water itself will be found the Carnatic Carp.

But the place they especially affect is the deep water and eddies under the banks, where the latter shelve down pretty steeply to the water.

To fish for them properly a boat is a necessity. If you have been using a 14-foot rod, you can continue to use it or change to a 12-foot fly rod. But the former is, I think the best, as it enables one to get out a longer line, and I'm sure the presence of a boat cannot tend to reassure any fish.

Take off your spinning trace and fit on a fairly stout trout cast, with a couple of small salmon flies. As with Mahseer, so with Carnatic Carp, dark flies seem the best, and in my opinion a fly on a No. 6 Limerick hook is about the best size. But forget all I told you about fly fishing for Mahseer; this is a very different matter. The Carnatic Carp takes a fly quite differently, he just sucks it down and then placidly continues his way. There is no tug as with trout, so that if you are fishing in a lazy or careless mood, such as we'll hope you never do, perhaps you may never know that the fish has taken your fly at all, because, once in his mouth, when he

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finds that it is not quite so succulent as he thought, he cheerfully and unconcernedly ejects it. So watch, and when you see a fish rise to your fly, or notice a swirl where your fly has just gone down, strike and strike quickly.

Having got your line all ready, get into your boat and have it gently paddled down the pool, keeping just far enough out from the bank so as to drop your tail fly fairly close in under the bank. Do not pull your flies too quickly, bring them to you slowly, or let them drift with the current keeping a taut line all the time.

And when you have struck a fish draw him out, and play him as far away from where you struck him as possible, and having landed him, go back, and try your fly in the same spot again, as these fish seem often to go in shoals.

Once into a fish you will not be in much doubt as to whether he is a Mahseer or Carnatic Carp. The latter has none of the dash of former, but bores down into the deepest water he can find, and if a big fish, it takes a good steady pull to induce him to come up and face the net.

Though these fish will take a spoon or dead bait at times, it is not often that you will

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catch them thus, since the smallness of their mouths generally precludes their taking, or being hooked by your bait, if the latter is of any size. They feed a great deal on water weeds, as do Mahseer, and the natives often fish for them with a piece of weed, wound round a hook resting on the bottom.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE LESSER FLY-TAKERS.

BARILS.

OF these fish perhaps the most numerous are the "Barils" of which there are some fourteen different species in India. The only one of these that attains to any size is "Barilius Bola," commonly called the Indian trout.

Unfortunately this very game little fish is confined only to certain parts of India, *i.e.*, Bengal and the United Provinces. I have never seen or heard of one being taken in Southern India. He will take both a fly and a small minnow and is a most sporting fish to play; frequently jumping clear out of water like his English namesake. He runs to about 2 lbs. in weight, and may be fished for just as trout are at home.

All the other Barils are small in size, seldom exceeding 6 inches in length, some of them, B. Canarensis in particular, being a very beautiful little fish.

They are exceedingly game and take the fly just like a little burn trout will in Scotland. Look for them in rivers where the water

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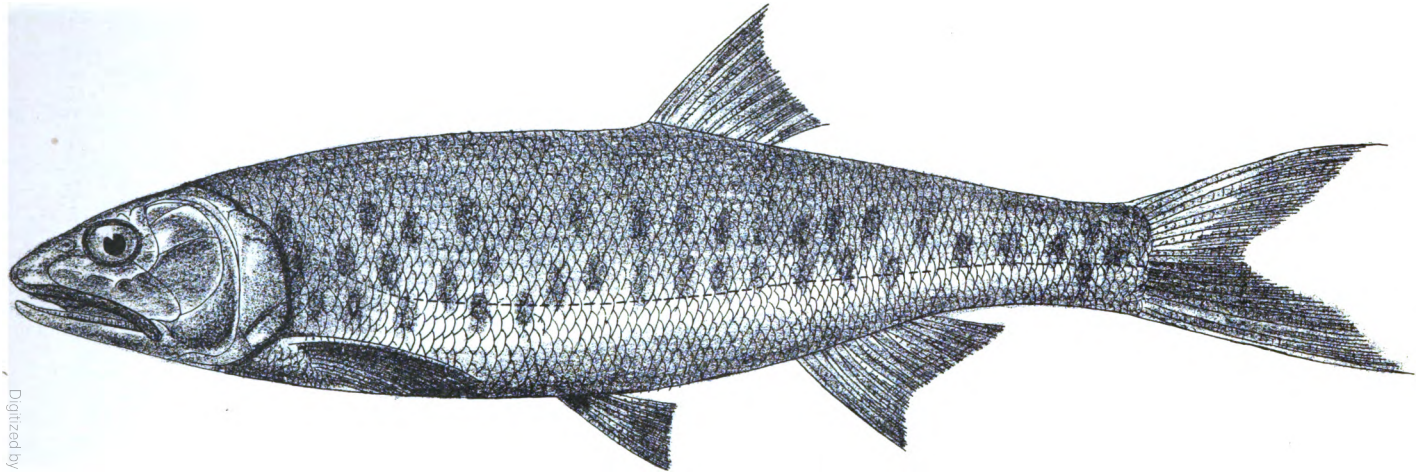

BARILIUS BOLA.

Plate III.

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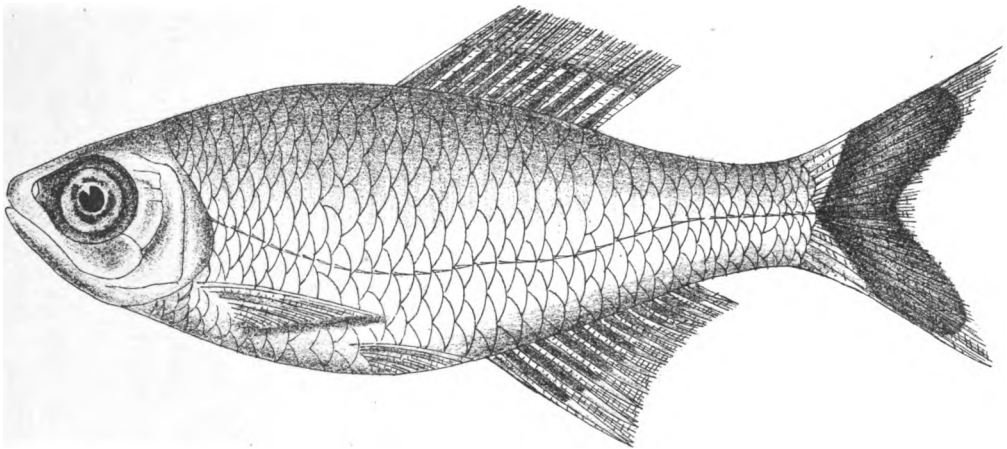

BARILIUS CANARENSIS.

Plate IV.

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runs rapidly among rocks, and along the edges of deep runs. Fish for them just as you would for trout at home, and remember they are just as shy and wary as trout. Your flies, however, must be very small. A No. 14 snake bend hook for choice, as the fish are small-mouthed, and though they will go for your fly readily, they are not easy to hook unless your flies are small.

Perhaps it is not very often that you will find yourself fishing for these lesser fly-takers, as they generally inhabit water in which Mahseer may be taken, and it is hard to leave off spinning for one minute when there is the hope of getting a run from a Mahseer. Still sometimes after a hard, and we'll hope successful, morning after the bigger fish, it is a nice and quiet form of relaxation to get one's little 10 ft. trout rod out and imagine oneself on some bonny burn in far Caledonia.

As regards colour in flies, here again, if you stick to dark colours you won't be far wrong; try black gnats, black palmers, blue duns, etc., though in the evening I have found white moths successful.

Fish cannily and fish up stream as you would in a small burn at home. Use light tackle, a fine drawn trout cast with three flies,

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There are several ways of putting on your drop flies, two of the simplest of which I will mention here. No. 1 : If your fly is on looped gut, bend your gut cast into a simple loop, and pass this through the loop of fly gut, then pass the fly up through this loop and pull taut. No. 2 : Tie a simple knot in the end of your drop, and then make a simple knot with drop round your cast and pull tight. You must do the knot of No. 2 just above a knot on your cast, so that it will not slip down.

Do not have the gut of your drop flies too long, or they will wind round your cast. Also put your two drop flies between two and three feet apart from each other, and away from the tail fly.

THE BLACK SPOT.

If you leave the rapids of the river and cast your flies where the river runs more gently, you will find that you are no longer catching Barils, but a small prettily coloured little fish with a black spot over the anal fin. These fish appear to be confined to only certain parts of Southern India.

They seem to swim in shoals, and require very quick striking. They also seem to be very shy, so that the longer the line you can get out, the better will be your chance of

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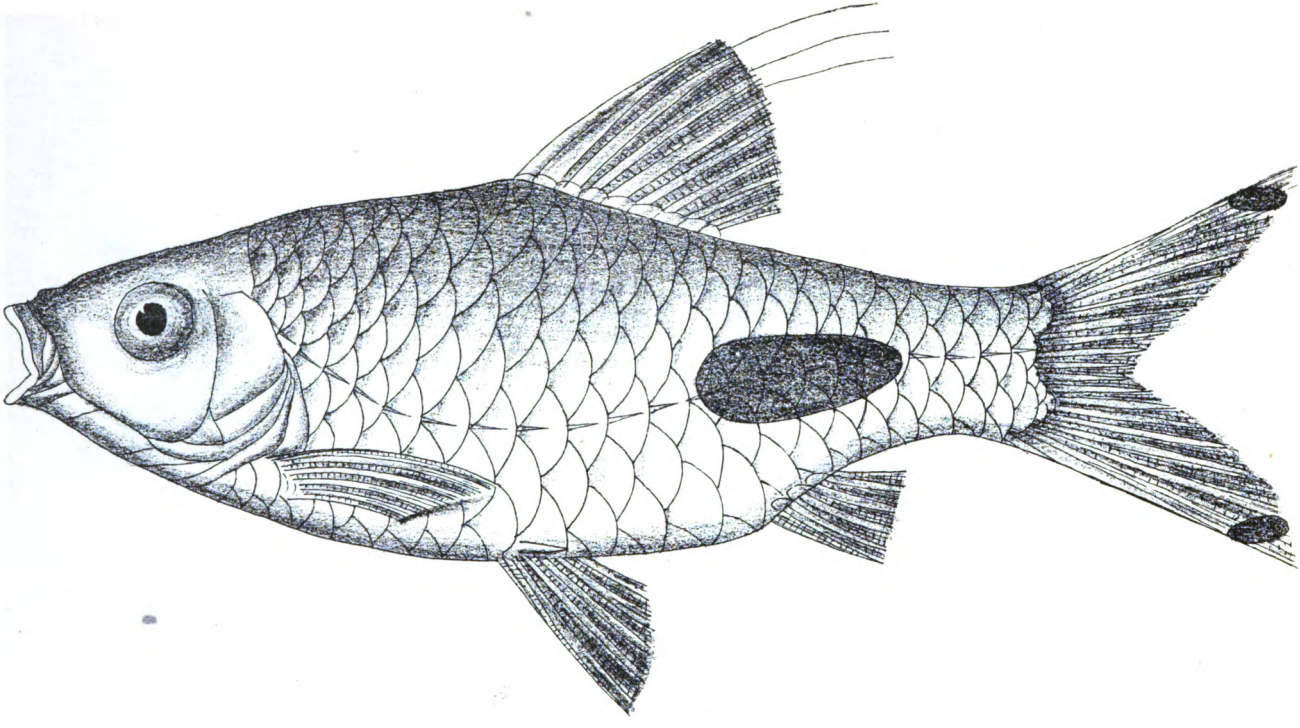

THE BLACK SPOT.

Plate V.

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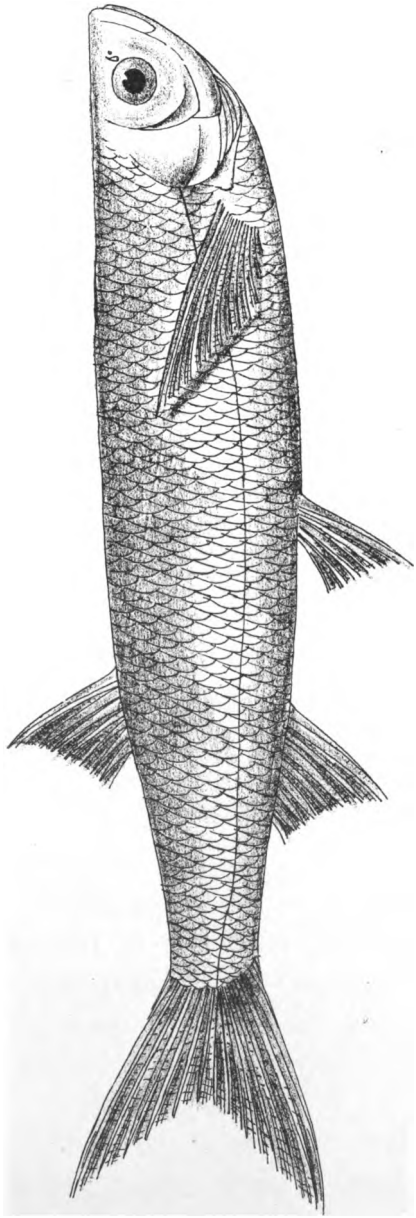

THE CHILWA.

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success. You will not catch them over $\frac{1}{4}$ lb., so fish very fine, with the same small flies as recommended for Barils.

THE CHELA.

And then the Chela or Chilwa. This is perhaps the commonest fish in India. There are some ten species of them scattered all over India, but all much the same. They run usually about six inches in length, though I have heard of them being caught nine inches, and a foot long. They are a small long-shaped fish, with a thin body, and the dorsel fin set very far back. They are covered with minute silver scales, which come off very easily when handled.

You will find them both in ponds, and in the still waters in the rivers. They are most game little fly-takers, occasionally jumping right out of the water after your flies.

Quick striking, and small flies are two of the *sine qua nons* for catching them.

They are perhaps the bait most appreciated by Mahseer, but as they are delicate as live bait, and come to pieces very rapidly as dead bait, you will usually find it convenient to use some fish of a tougher species.

THE BATCHWA.

There are some seven species of Batchwa in India, the best known being P. Garua. The

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Batchwa is a game little fish running up to 2 lbs. in weight, who will take either fly (lake trout size) or small spoon.

He is only to be found in the rivers of Northern India. One excellent thing about him is that he will take in coloured water, in fact the time to fish for them is between March and November, when Mahseer fishing is out of the question. They have small teeth which cut one's gut occasionally, so examine your snoods from time to time.

MEGALOPS CYPRINOIDES.

Before leaving the lesser fly-takers, here is a fish I must mention. He seems very little known, perhaps his name has frightened people, but none the less, he is well worthy of mention. I see that Dr. Day says he is to be found all over India; he does not mention however—I speak under correction—to what size he runs. Personally I have caught them up to ¾lb. in weight, and have been broken by fish which must have been well over 3 lbs. One I had hooked and played for four or five minutes, must have been quite 4 lbs., however I was fishing very fine, and he got among some weeds under the bank and broke me. My experience of these fish is not sufficient for me to say when, where and why they take fly.

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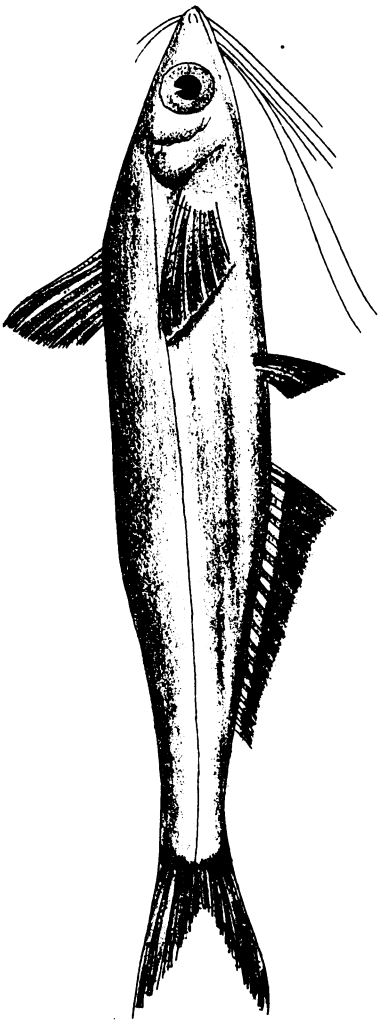

THE BUTCHWA.

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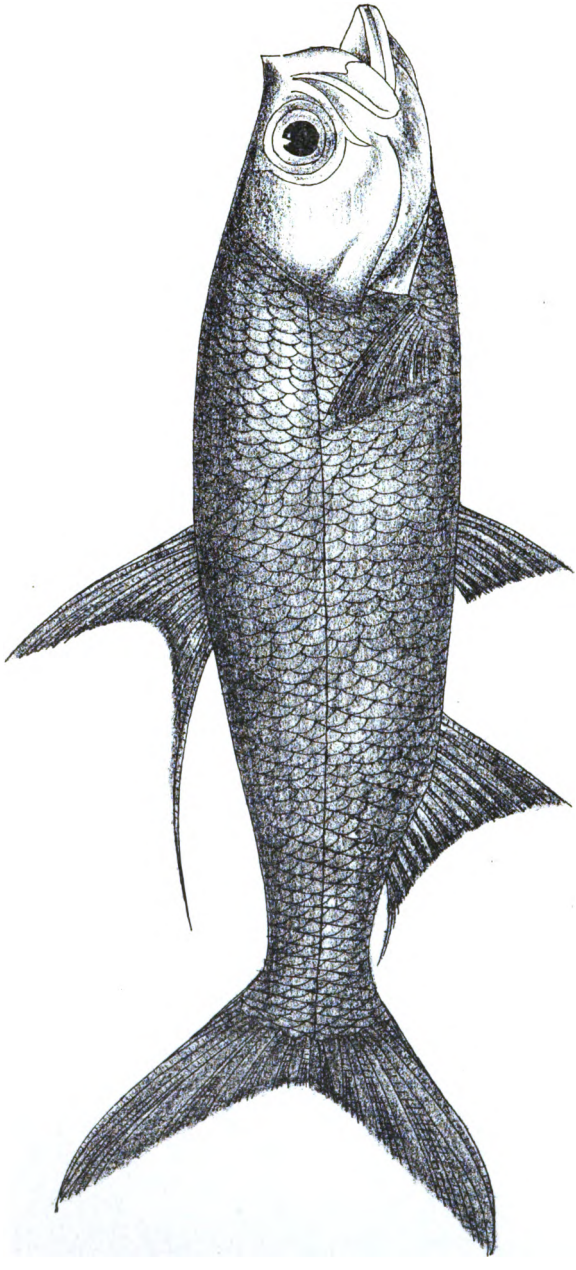

MEGALOPS.

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Two tanks near to Madras, both of which hold Megalops, I have frequently fished in; in one tank, though I have caught them with a worm, I have never seen one rise on the surface to my knowledge; though in the other tank I have seen them rolling over in shoals in the early mornings, and have had excellent sport with them with a fly.

They take a big sized trout fly, any colour seems to suit them, and require very quick striking, and when hooked, they give excellent play. They are really estuary fish, but seem to become acclimatized to fresh water very quickly. They are said to be very destructive to fry, so are not a good fish to introduce into preserved waters.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE MURRAL.

HERE is a gentleman with many vices and but few virtues, but by reason of those few virtues we will admit him to our select circle. To enumerate them, he takes a fly and spoon bait, indifferently it is true, but then he is greedy as regards live-bait and frogs. Also he is a very common fish, abounding in tanks and weedy pools all over India.

He has one more virtue too, though it is one that does not concern us much, and that is he is one of the few fish which exhibit parental affection towards their young. But when they get old enough to look after themselves, then he'll eat them quick enough, so after all it is a virtue that does not wear very well. Among his numerous vices, perhaps the two worst are, his strong cannibal propensities among the fry of his betters; and a large mouth full of nasty sharp teeth, that have an annoying way of cutting through your snood or trace, if you are using gut.

You will find Murral also in the deep still pools of the rivers, and sometimes will take them when spinning for Mahseer. Also I have

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Plate IX.

THE MURRAL.

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taken them when float fishing with a worm; so he is a pretty ubiquitous gentleman taken altogether. But he is a very shy fish, a fact which you will do well to remember, if you are fishing exclusively for Murral. Perhaps the most deadly way of fishing for Murral is with live-bait.

First you must have a good sized float, and a trace (of fine Hercules wire is the best) of a couple of yards long, with a No. 3, 4, or 5 Limerick hook at the end. Put on your float about 2½ feet from the hook. Next select a small fish of 3½ or 4 inches from your bait kettle, and pass the hook through his upper lip, taking care to injure him as little as possible. Then put on enough lead about 8 inches from your bait, to keep him under water.

Then having fastened your trace to your running line, swing your bait carefully into the water; either hold your rod, or fix it with the reel running free. Strike when your float moves off and disappears under water.

Another excellent way of catching Murral is that, much adopted by the natives, of setting trimmers with live frogs. Select some place where the water is fairly deep, close under the bank, and also where some tree or branch extends out from the shore. Have a hook

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(No. 3 Limerick is a good size, or you can use a treble if preferred) fastened to a short length of wire, and the wire fastened on to a piece of good stout twine. Now take a live frog —one of the small brown ones are the best— and gathering up the loose skin on his back, pass the point and barb of the hook through this. Then pass the frog and line over any branch jutting out above the water, and lower gently till the frog sits naturally on the water and the hook is relieved from his weight. Then bind the loose end of twine round some solid object on the bank, and go away and set other trimmers in like fashion.

If however, you want the fun of playing the fish, you can use your running line instead of the twine and fix your rod on the bank. In this way, though, there is not always the same likelihood of the fish being hooked, because the reel lets out line ; while in the other way, the line being taut, the fish hooks himself immediately on taking the bait. And you yourself must keep away from your trimmers, as the Murral is a shy fish as I said before, and will not come feeding on the surface if he sees you anywhere near. And again there is not much fun in playing a Murral, he is rather like an animated log. I remember one day fishing in a pool, in a river, which I was told

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held small Mahseer, and in two consecutive casts I caught a 3-lb. Mahseer and a 10-lb. Murral. I was fishing with fine gut and a small spoon, so dared put no strain on; however, I landed the Murral in eight minutes, while the Mahseer took ten to land. Why the former never cut through my gut was a mystery to me, he must, I think, have got it in between two of his teeth.

Another plan of fishing for Murral, which though I have never tried it personally, I hear on excellent authority is sometimes very successful, is dapping with a dead frog. This is apparently the plan to try when you get one of those ponds so covered by water-lilies that ordinary fishing is out of the question. A short stiff rod is necessary, and on the end of your running line, a short wire trace with a stout treble hook. Hook the dead frog through the loose skin on his back and then commence to dap (like one does for pike at home with a dead fish in rough water) between the leaves on the pond. If a Murral is kind enough to take your bait, lift him out without ceremony.

One point worthy of notice with these fish, is their curious faculty of being able to live in the sun-dried mud of a tank.

There are several tanks which hold Murral,

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which run dry for four or five months every year, and the fish in them aestivate during all this time in the dried mud.

The Murral too, is one of the few fish which can breathe our air direct, owing to an air-cavity he carries in his internal mechanism. In looking at the illustration of the Murral do not be led into the error of thinking that his head is long-shaped like that of a pike. In reality, the head and neck are the broadest part of the fish.

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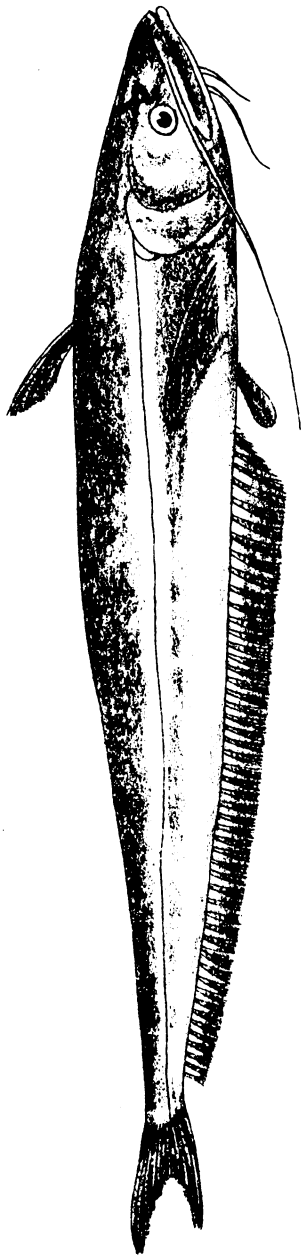
Plate X.



WALLAGO ATTU.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE SILURIDÆ.

OF the three larger siluroids treated of here, the only one with which I have any real acquaintance is Wallago Attu.

But from all that I have been able to gather from friends, the same method of fishing pursued with Wallago Attu, appears to be suitable for the other two.

So I will treat the three mentioned below as if they were one and the same fish.

All three are commonly called freshwater sharks, owing to their voracity, their formidable teeth and their general ugliness.

One peculiarity of all Siluridæ is that their skins are scaleless.

(i) Wallago Attu—sometimes called "Bawalli," also Mulley.

(ii) Silundia Gangetica.

(iii) Bagarius Jarrellii—sometimes called the Goonch.

One of these latter fish, holds I believe, very near the record in size, for a fish caught honestly on rod and line. This was a fish of some 5 ft. 8 inches in length, weighing just under 138 lbs. and was caught by a Mr. Van

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Cortland in the Jumna. It took, if my memory serves me right, a 12 lb. Rohu, which was foul hooked and being played by that gentleman.

Though these fish will occasionally take a phantom or dead bait, by far the most paying way of fishing for them is by live-baiting. Take any small fishes (except those of the Murral species, which must come up to breathe) of 3 to 6 inches long, and fish precisely as laid down for live-baiting for Mahseer. Remember also that their formidable array of teeth makes a wire trace essential, and your rod and line should be strong, as though these fish give none of the play of the Mahseer, they run to great weight, and put a very fair strain on the line when being towed in.

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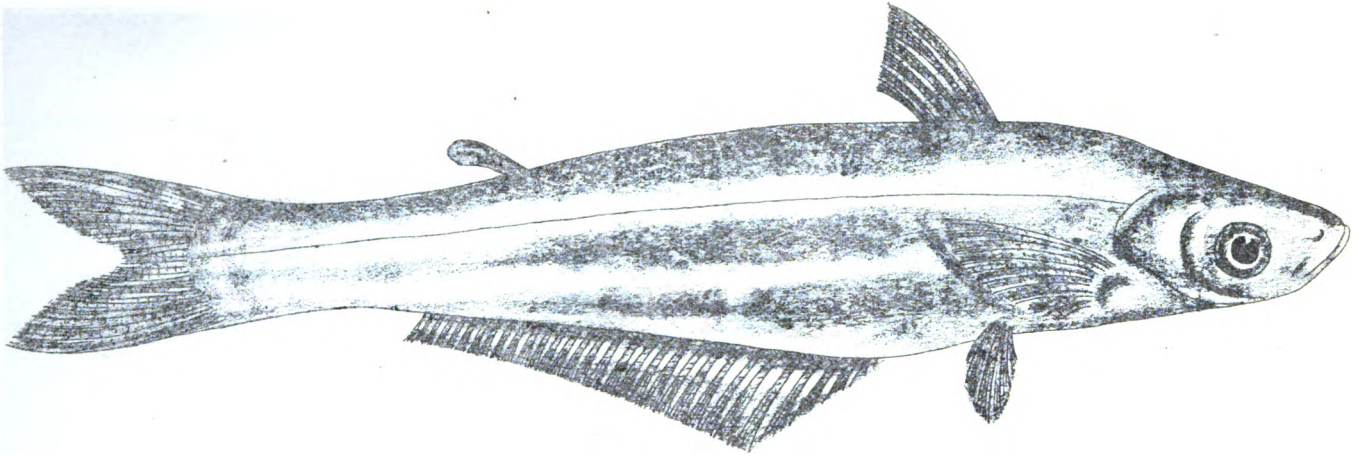

SILUNDIA GANGETICA.

Plate XI.

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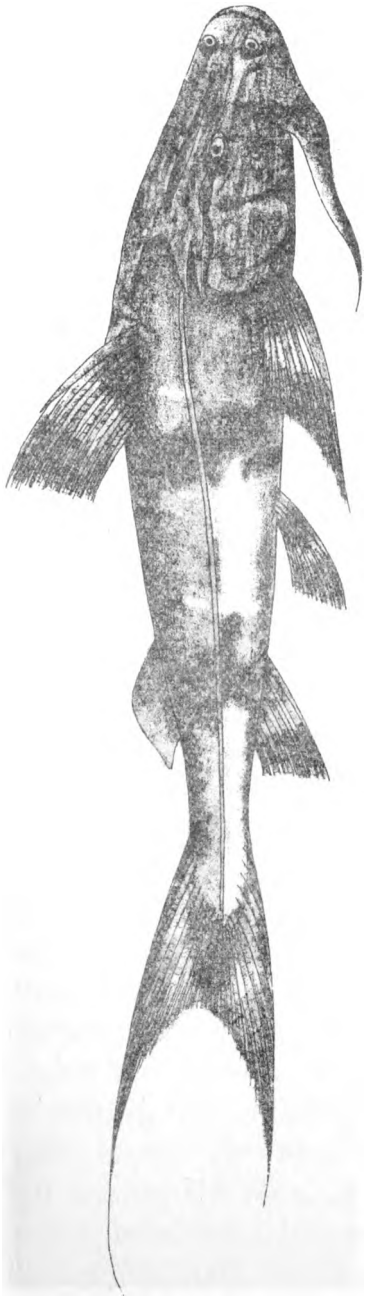
Plate XII.



THE GOONCH.

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CHAPTER IX.

FLOAT-FISHING.

AND now let us leave the rivers altogether, with their rapids and their pools, and the glorious scenery, and having returned to our daily tasks again, let us look round and see what we can find in the way of our favourite sport, to solace ourselves with nearer home.

In many stations in parts of India, one will find tanks of sorts, either Water supply, Temple, or Irrigation tanks. These latter are not as a rule of much use, as in the hot weather they usually run dry, and the fish in them never attain to any size.

The temple tanks may be good for fish, except that they are so often netted on contract, which of course ruins them for our purpose.

There remain only the water supply tanks, and a certain number of private tanks in which netting is prohibited. These will be what we want. Provided that these tanks are fed during the rains, by channels from rivers or canals, through which fry can find

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ingress, then there should be very fair coarse fishing in them.

But do not think that you are just going to sit and watch your float till it bobs, and then haul out fish. The Indian fish is not honest, in fact some of them are most accomplished thieves, time and again will they steal all your bait, and hardly move your float. In fact, if you are not a very keen fisherman, it is quite on the cards that you will give up float-fishing altogether and stick to small game shooting, till you can get to your rivers again.

But for the benefit of those few keen anglers, I will give a few notes on some of the fish worth catching; though to my readers, who follow me through these few pages, I most earnestly commend that very excellent book of Mr. Thomas, "Tank Angling."

THE LABEO.

Here is a fish, a most awful thief, and a fish that will go far to breaking your heart, and sickening you with float-fishing altogether.

In all float-fishing I would recommend you to use those most excellent floats called detective floats, invented by Mr. Thomas, a full description of which will be found in the chapter headed Tackle.

Fish with paste, with your bait just resting

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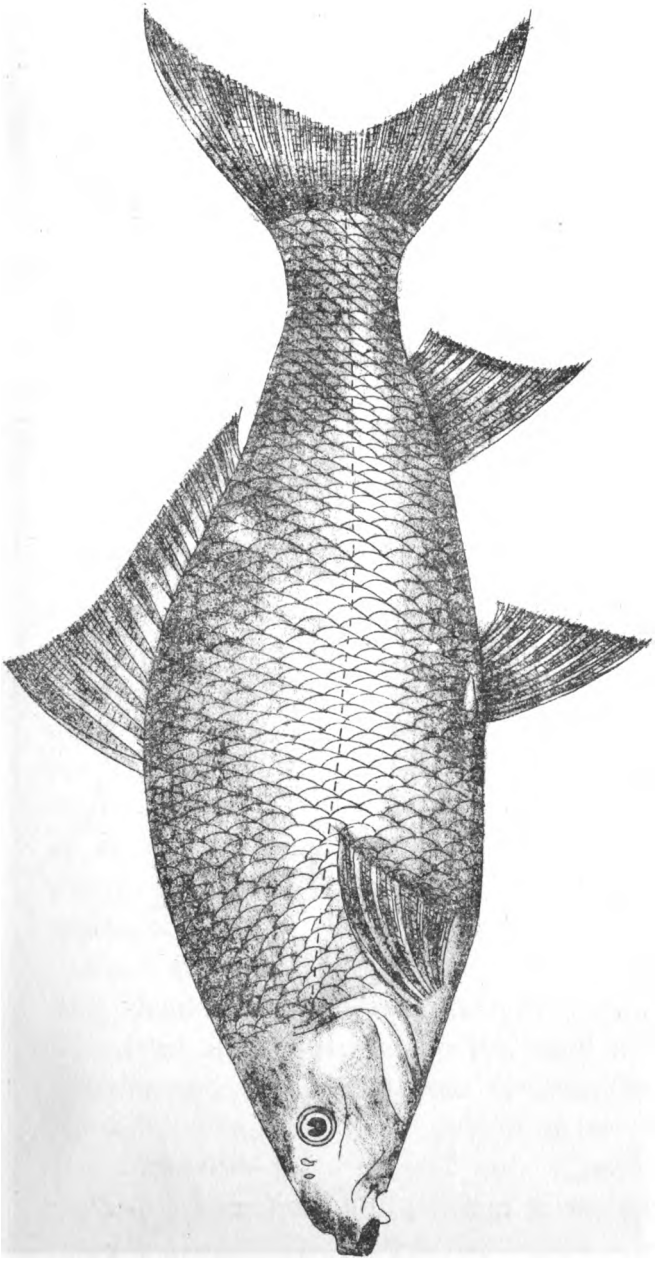
Plate XIII.



LABEO.

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on the bottom, and ground-bait the water round with wet bran thrown in between your float and the bank.

It is not much use fishing in less than 3½ or 4 feet of water—the deeper it is the better. And do not throw your bait farther away than just under the point of your rod, as you cannot strike properly if your bait is too far away.

As for your rod, it should be fairly stiff to admit of the very quick striking necessary for these fish, and a good length is 10 feet.

A fairly big hook, say No. 2 or 3 Limerick scale, should be used and weighted so as to rest on the bottom. Do not fix on the weight to your gut collar, or snood, as then you have no means of knowing if your hook is resting properly on the ground. A plan that I have found always very successful is to have a short length of gut, say 1 inch, tied to the shank of your hook, and hanging loose underneath.

Knot this gut, and pinch on shot, or simplex leads to make up weight required. The lead apparently lies in the mud on the bottom and does not appear to scare away the fish. Use good stout gut, or better still Hercules wire.

Watch your float and when it gives one or

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two slow bobs, and then twitches rapidly, strike quick and hard, and you may, or may not get him, as he is an awful thief. When you have caught a labeo there is no mistaking him, as he has a funny little fringed mouth placed right under his snout.

Personally I have never caught a "Mirga," but I am told that the same method of fishing applies to them.

This illustration opposite is that of the Mirga, his smaller cousin the White Carp is so like him, however, that no second illustration is necessary for

THE WHITE CARP.

Here is another fish usually inhabiting the same ponds and to be fished for in the same manner as the labeo. He does not however run so big, as, though you may expect with luck to catch labeos up to 7 or 8 lbs. in weight, you will not get the White Carp exceeding 3 or 4 lbs.

A good receipt for paste is as follows:— Take 4 oz. of common flour, boil, dry, and pound fine. Take 2 oz. of groundnut, roast fine and pound up. Take ½ oz. of coriander seed, roast and grind to powder. Then mix together into a thick paste. This is the receipt given by Mr. Thomas in his book, and I must apologise to him for thus copying it,

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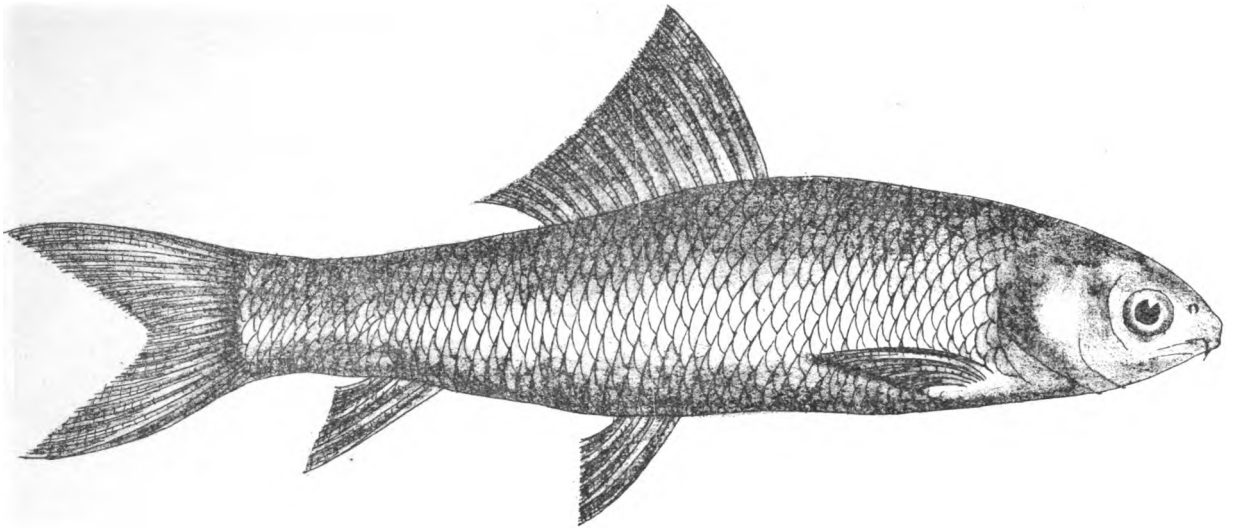

THE MIRGA.

Plate XIV.

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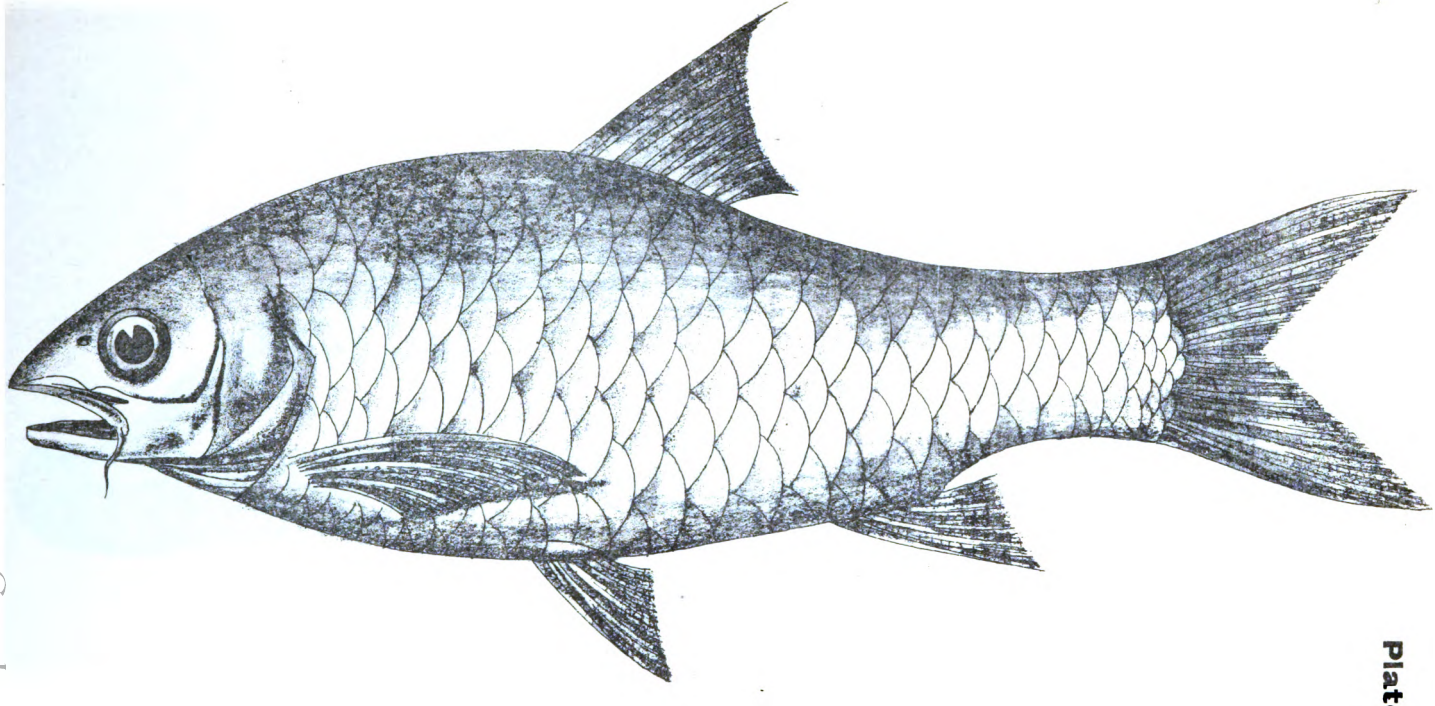

THE OLIVE CARP.

Plate XV.

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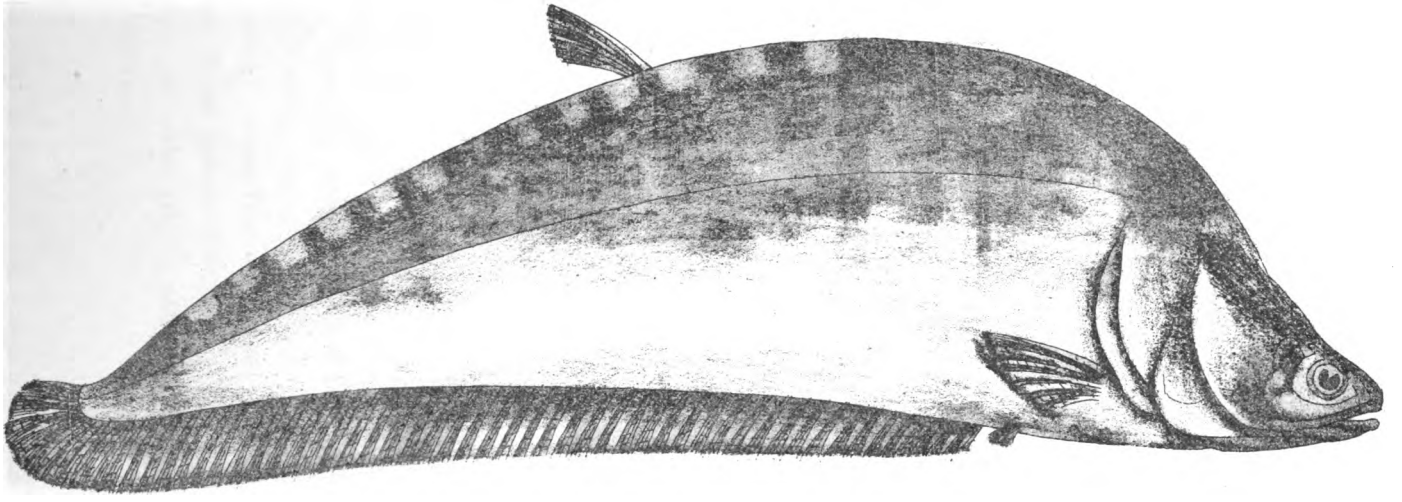

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Plate XVI.

NOTOPTERUS CHITALA.

(This fish is covered with minute scales, which are not shown in illustration.)

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my only excuse however is, that I have never found a better or simpler bait. One thing I would add to it, however. Get the paste to the right consistency by using dry flour or bran, and then add a little clean white cotton wool and mix thoroughly. By this plan you will find the bait remains longer on your hook and is not so liable to flake off.

THE OLIVE CARP.

The Olive Carp is a fish that extends over most of India, and may be occasionally taken with a fly, but a worm or paste bait seems to suit him better. The largest that I have caught or seen caught of this fish weighed ½ lb. though I believe that they do run considerably bigger.

If float-fishing, watch for a few quick bobs and then the disappearance of the float, the chances are that it will be an Olive Carp, or our next friend but one, the Indian Gudgeon.

NOTOPTEROUS CLITALA.

This fine fish that runs up to 4 ft. in length may be sometimes taken with a worm, though the best way of fishing for him is with a small dead bait, about 3 inches long on spinning tackle. Spin fairly deep, for though you will see these fishes rolling over on the surface, this is only play, and they feed near the bottom.

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They give magnificent play when hooked, their shape giving them great power in the water, and they occasionally spring clean out of the water while being played.

Do not spin too fast, as their mouths are very small. These fish seem to be only found in Central and Northern India!

THE INDIAN GUDGEON.

He is a very ugly, yellowish, semi-transparent fish with a flat head, and a mouth full of teeth. He runs up to 3 lbs. in weight and is a bold biter.

NOTOPTERUS KAPIRAT

Is a flat-sided deep fish with a very small dorsal fin, and a ventral, anal and caudal fin all in one. He is silvery in colour with minute scales and runs up to about 2 lbs. in weight. A small hook is necessary, as they have small mouths compared to their size. Fish with a worm, or a dead prawn (without its shell) and strike when your float bobs vigorously. With all these fish, have your bait resting on the bottom.

ETROPLUS SURATENSIS.

This is such a jolly little fish, that one cannot help being fond of him. His looks too are in his favour, and when on the feed he is a more honest biter than most Indian fish. He is a flat-sided fish, like a Bream with

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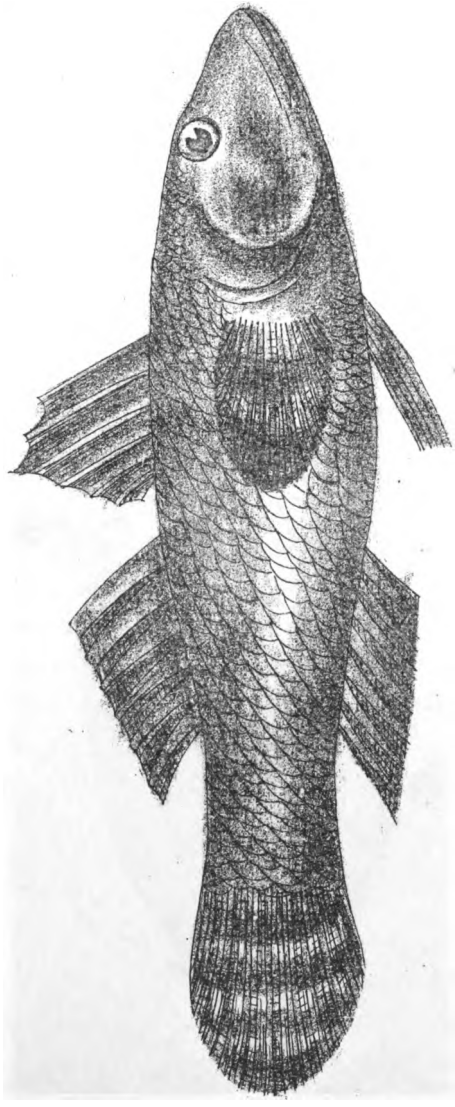

INDIAN GUDGEON.

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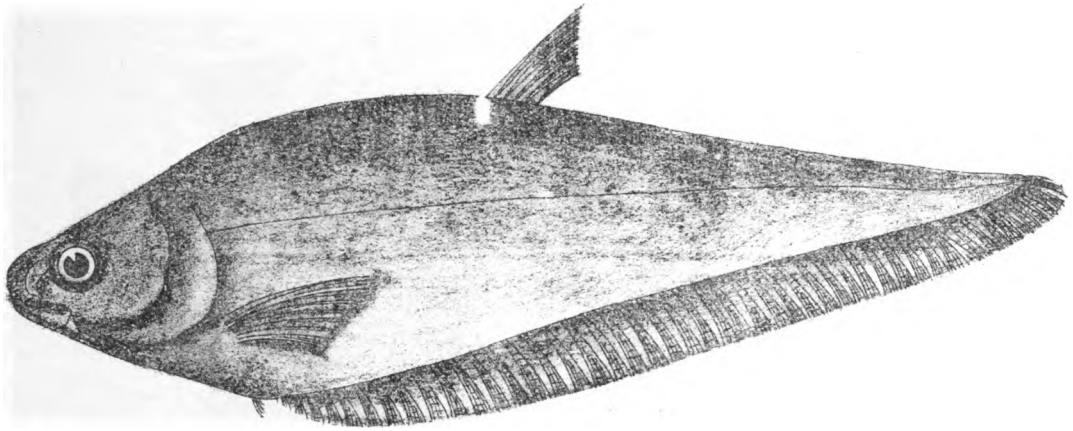

NOTOPTERUS KAPIRAT.

(This fish has minute scales not shown in illustration.)

Plate XVIII.

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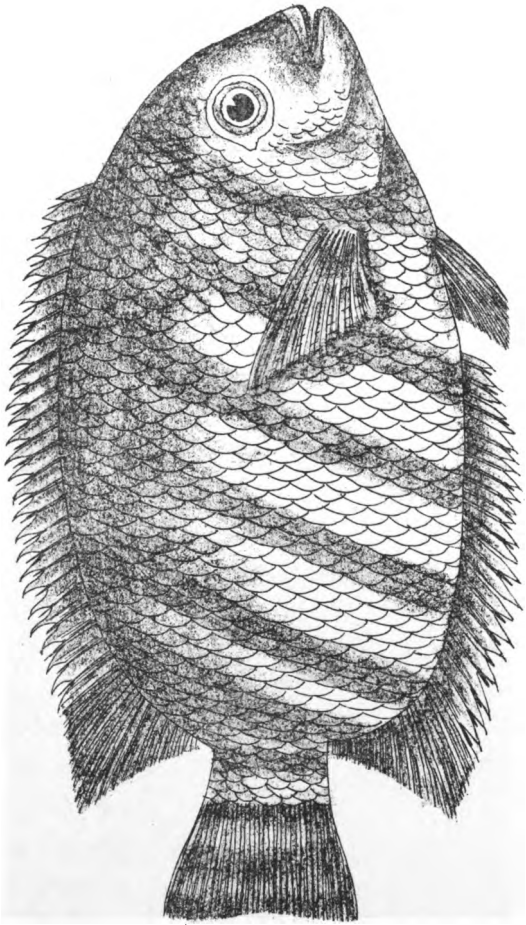
Plate XIX.



ETROPLUS SURATENSIS.

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greenish tranverse bands, and little white spots, and he has a funny little mouth with prominent teeth, rather like that of a small monkey. He feeds chiefly on weeds, though will take a small worm. I believe that they run up to 2 lbs., but I have never caught them over ½ lb. myself. A 2lb-er should give excellent sport, as their shape gives them great power in the water, and they are game fish for their size.

In fishing for them I found that it was best not to strike for them, but when your float signalled a bite, to pull the line fairly slowly towards one, and generally the fish seemed to hook themselves while making grabs at the worm.

They are pretty little fish, and well worth transferring to an aquarium. In one bungalow we lived in we had a small tank, size 6 ft. by 4 ft. and 2 ft. deep made, in which we put any small fish we caught, and we derived much amusement and a good deal of instruction watching their habits.

In fishing for this fish, do not have your bait resting on the bottom, but about 1 to 3 ft. below the surface.

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CHAPTER X.

ESTUARY FISH.

OF the two most important fish to be caught in estuaries, *i.e.*, the Bamin and the Nair (or Cock-up), I regret that I have no personal experience. However for the benefit of those who may be likely to visit the Malabar Coast of India, I will jot down a few notes, that friends have been kind enough to give me about these fish.

The style of fishing is apparently the same for both, only with the Nair fish use stouter tackle, and a bigger bait, as they run large, and are extremely powerful fish.

It is if of no use trying for these fish except when they are on the feed. When the tide is at its lowest, and just about to turn, go down to the banks of the river or backwater, and take up a good position ready to commence.

As soon as the tide commences to flow strongly, you will see innumerable small fish swimming up the river, and shortly after, you will see by the plunges and swirls, that the big fish have commenced their dinner. Then swing in your dead bait or phantom, and spin

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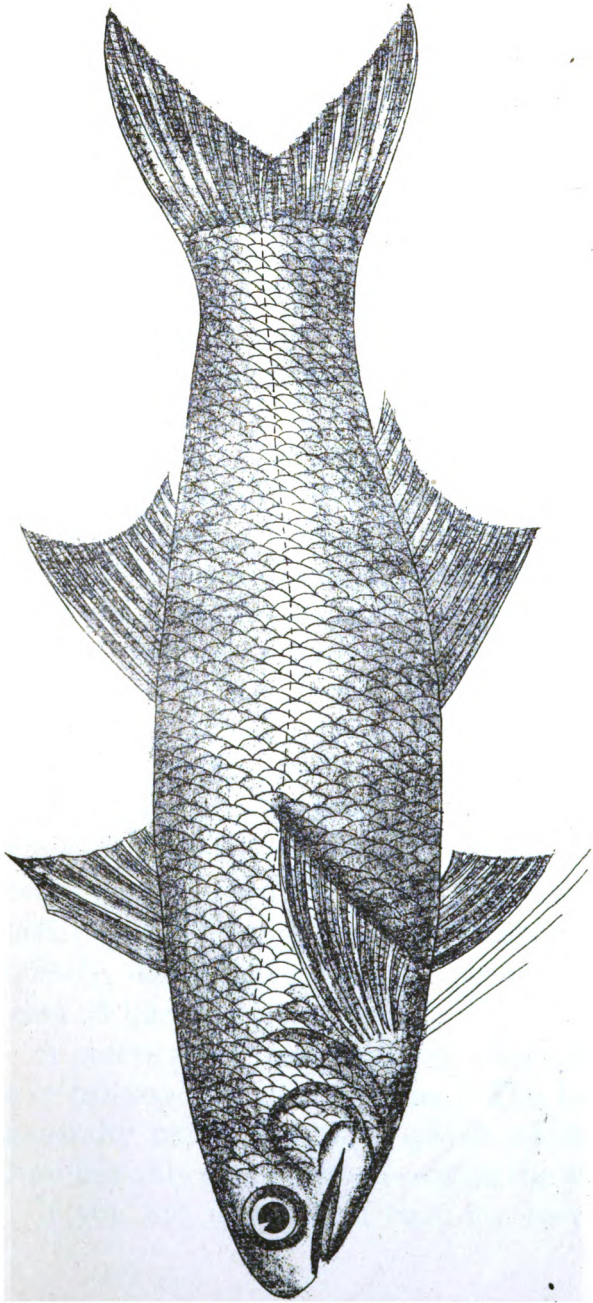

THE BAMIN.

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slowly, letting the current swing your bait round, and then pull it up to you under the bank.

And if you are taken, look out, for the fish are powerful, and take out line at a tremendous pace. Mind if you are fishing near a bridge, that he does not take your line round the piers and break you; if he shows signs of trying this, post a man up above with a pile of stones, and tell him to keep him off if possible.

You will not as a rule catch Bāmin of over 10 lbs. weight. He has a mouth full of teeth, and gut traces are useless; his mouth also is hard and does not afford the same hook-hold as a Mahseer does, so with these fish it is as well to add an extra treble. The Nair fish also has a mouth full of teeth, and as he runs to 50 or 60 lbs., good stout wire traces are necessary.

As a rule, you will not be in doubt long which fish you have hooked, as the Bāmin takes your bait with a violent rush, the Nair fish, on the contrary, taking it slowly and quietly, though once he feels the restraint he goes off like an express train.

A practical eye will also tell which of the two fish rose out in the stream. The Bamin generally makes a violent splash while the Nair fish only makes a great swirl in the water.

If you are using dead bait, the best fish

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you can bait with are the small grey mullet, and it is as well to have 2 or 3 flights ready baited, when fishing, as the dinner hour of the fish is all too brief.

Also have plenty of line on your reel, 100 yards at least, and see that you let him have it as quick as he wants, consistent with keeping the maximum strain on him that you dare. Apparently one can go on fishing all through the monsoon for these fish, which is a great advantage, as an hour or two a day with one's rod would be a delightful change from the depressing monotony of life, during a West Coast monsoon.

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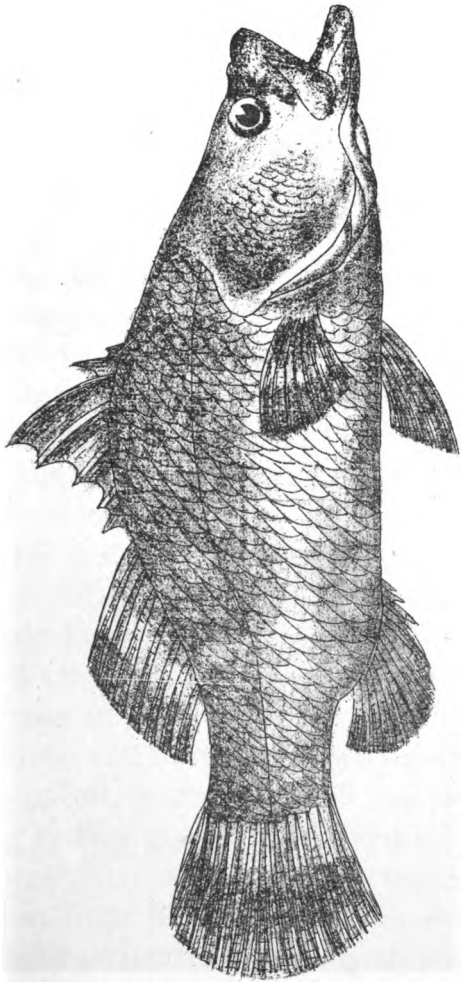

THE NAIR FISH.

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CHAPTER XI.

ODDS AND ENDS.

I ONCE took a Jesuit priest out shooting with me, and we started in a little boat on the backwaters. He did not appear to be happy so I asked him what was worrying him. He said, "I am big, the boat is small, if we upset, the little crocodiles will eat us."

So we landed—and he shot me in the leg with a charge of No. 8. Then I thought the crocodiles were the lesser risk.

And I do not think that you need fear crocodiles much either, even when you wade in fairly deep. I remember one day, bathing in a delightful pool in the Tunga Bhadra, I barked my toe on what I thought was a rock, and cussed it accordingly. But when I was drying on the bank, the rock came to the surface, and started off down stream; so I shot it, an 8 ft. crocodile, which was rather returning evil for good. And, the difficulty we had to get him out, he wasn't quite dead, and what little life he had left in him he made most excellent use of. My shikarri shoved a large stick in his mouth, while I hauled him out by the tail, and if you want to know the power of a Saurian's tail, just try catching

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hold of a wounded one by that appendage, but don't omit the precaution of the stick applied at the business end.

I know when first I came out I used to cut open every crocodile I shot, in the hopes of finding gold bangles and turquoise rings, and a few other such trifles, but I never found anything but bits of brick and such like. Once though I did find something—30 eggs—and I tried blowing them!!! Let us draw a veil over the fate of eight and twenty!! One of the others, I believe a lady has still in her drawing room, the other which got cracked, I gave to one of the girls I loved, and she broke it up later, when my fickle fancy wandered. Why do people sometimes call them alligators? I believe that there are no 'gator in India, or out of America for that matter.

How to tell them apart. Watch them smile, and then if the lower canines fit into grooves in the upper jaw, he's a 'gator, and if into holes a crocodile (or mugger.)

You can shoot or fish for crocodiles if you like. If the former—aim just where the head joins the body and break his spinal column. If hit in the right spot he will spread out, as if galvanised, and never move. Or you can try for his heart—if you think a crocodile has one—just behind the forelegs. But if you do

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not kill them outright you will lose 19 out of every 20 you hit, as they have a marvellous faculty of regaining the water.

Perhaps the best way to fish for them and the way which gives most sport, is to take a long hollow bamboo, say 8 or 10 feet, and to one end, 6 inches from the end, tie a stout piece of cord about 2 feet long, with a large hook fastened to it. Take the precaution to open out the strands of your cord near the hook, or the crocodile will promptly bite through it. Then fasten a large chunk of meat on the hook, and set the bamboo adrift in any large pool, in which you know there are mugger, and get away well out of sight. If a mugger takes the bait, the buoyancy of the bamboo drives the hook into him and then when he sinks to the bottom, as his instinct is to do, up goes the free end of the bamboo. Then you can finish him as you think best. Get into a boat and "ride him" with hog spears, this gives the best fun. But go canny, as there is generally room enough left in his mouth for your leg, if available.

EELS.

Eels I hate, both to look at, to catch, and to eat. If you really want them for food for yourself or servants, the best way to catch them is to set night lines.

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He is a hateful brute an eel, the nasty way in which he takes your bait, and then curls his tail round a weed, deluding you into unholy and boisterous glee under the impression that you have got a 4 lbs. fish on at least. And then when he comes up, he isn't a bit apologetic. He ties your cast into knots, makes your landing net into a horrid mess, if you are foolish enough to use it, and when you do get him on the bank, you find that he has got your hook so far down into his internal anatomy, that you generally leave it to him to digest at his leisure. No, my advice is that unless you can at once swing him clear to your henchman behind, out with your knife, and let him go hook and all. No, on second thoughts always slay them, as they are great fry and spawn eaters.

TURTLES.

A turtle I have never caught, my only acquaintance with them is a bowing one, when one comes up, winks at one, and having successfully dodged the unerring half-brick, sinks to the bottom to continue his nefarious practises of hunting fry, and biting through angler's gut. I have also vague recollections of wildly chasing turtles on the West Coast, and trying to turn them on their backs, before they reached cover.

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FROGS.

Really I could pity frogs, if only they had not such raucous voices and such a total absence of shame in using them.

Every man's hand seems to be against the frog. When he sits on the bank and sings merrily, the paddy bird and other birds eat him. When he betakes himself to the water for refuge he is immediately pounced on by Murral and various other fishes. And he is a friendly little animal. In Madras especially the little house-frogs make themselves quite at home. They sit on your pillow, in your tooth glass, and even in your straw hat, and when you indignantly oust them, they jump with such a flop on to the floor or into your boots, all spots are alike to them.

It is a curious fact that the lower class natives, whose tastes their staunchest advocate cannot call refined—never seem to eat frogs. The Chinese do, and it's most amusing to watch them catching them, or take a hand at it oneself. Their methods are primitive but effectual.

They go out in pairs. One of the pair, usually a diminutive boy, holds in his hands a pair of grandfather's trousers, each leg tied at the bottom with a piece of string. He

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doesn't take father's nether garments, as father is probably too active, and would catch him.

This is the creel. No. 2 has a 6 ft. bamboo, with a piece of string 6 or 7 ft. long tied at one end. At the end of the string by way of bait, is tied—simply—a dirty piece of rag, no hook or anything. Then the fun begins; the rag is dangled down a bank, into a paddy field, swamp or canal, and pulled slowly up the bank. The rag seems to annoy froggie, as he jumps at it, and grabs hold, being swung up and deposited into the waiting trousers, before he has the presence of mind to let go.

I never could understand why the frogs took the rag, but it always seemed a sure bait with them, and I used to spend hours watching the Chinaman catching them after any heavy fall of rain. The only skill in the game lay in swinging the frog instantly into the trousers, as immediately froggie's astonishment was overcome he let go promptly, often with the result that he went happily flying into the water on the opposite side of the bank.

CRABS.

And these you may catch occasionally. I caught a monster once, fishing in an old moat known to contain large fish, but fish that

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could not be tempted anyhow. It was just at dusk; we were trying bottom-fishing with lumps of raw meat, when my float started slowly to move away.

I struck and up came a huge thing all legs and claws. He was not hooked at all, but was just hanging on to the meat, which he let go of just as he was successfully steered into the landing net. And then the joyous time we had trying to secure him, made more difficult by the gathering gloom. But we tied him up at last, and handed him over to our servants to eat; they were anxious that we should try him as soup, but we decided not.

PRAWNS.

Here we have another denizen of the deep whom I cannot abide. If you are float-fishing, and there are many of them about, they will nearly drive you to distraction. Down goes your float, slowly, slowly, varied occasionally by a short bob, and time after time you will strike, with no result, except that your temper wears thin.

The natives like fishing for them though, as they grow to 6 or 8 inches long. They use a small hook, and give the prawn plenty of time to gorge the bait. All the slow pulling of your float at first is the prawn drawing your bait down, with his long arms.

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Prawns are said to he good as bait, but you must shell them first. However I do not think any bait is so good as a small red worm, unless you are fishing for Labeo or Carps, when paste is the bait to use.

SHOOTING FISH.

Murral may often be shot, though this is rather a poaching dodge. Still you may be out shooting with your rifle and come on a tank in which they abound. If in the heat of the day you will probably see the fish basking on the surface, or a few inches below. If under water remember to allow for refraction, *i.e.*, aim below your mark. The head is usually the best spot to aim at. If the fish are under water, you will only stun them, so have a man ready to go in and retrieve.

Another poaching dodge, but justifiable occasionally, is as follows: If you are fishing in a fair-sized tank which you know holds big fish, get an ordinary country bladder and blow it out tight, tying the mouth up with string. Tie also to the string a small stick like a pencil, about 6 inches long. On to this stick tie tightly the end of a piece of line and then wind some 6 feet round it. Then make a small slit at the bottom, and pass the line through, to prevent it unwinding. Leave 1 foot hanging clear. To the end of this tie a

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piece of stout gut, about a foot long, with a hook attached. On the hook put a dead frog. Then send it adrift so that it will float across the tank with the wind. If a fish takes your bait, the line is jerked from the slit and unwinds, and the fish plays itself. You meanwhile watch from afar, and think out the best way to get at the bladder.

"And this is your boasted British jurisprudence," as the Babu said when the transport mule kicked him. So, a word in season, be careful when making an extra fine cast, to see that the country is all clear behind. I remember once fishing on the steps of a temple tank and meaning to daintily drop my fly over a rising fish. But all that happened, was a venerable old native gentleman's spotless puggarie came bounding down the steps, to his intense indignation and disgust. As I could not extract the fly, I broke, so perhaps he remembered me again, one day when pressing it more firmly on his head.

Again, three men were fishing a rapid for Mahseer. The scream of a reel brought two excited men to the third, but where was the big fish dashing madly hither and thither?

No, a moment's calm investigation revealed all. Away across country sped an unfortu-

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nate pariah dog, giving tongue, in a manner that would have caused half the Peshawar pack to die of envy, and out rushed the line, and the reel screamed merrily, 80 yards, 100 yards, 120 yards, only five more yards, what will happen, and in the air, pregnant with the breathless suspense of three watching men, came back a weird howl, and slack line, as the unfortunate pye made tracks for the eternal snows with the hooks of a 2-inch spoon buried deep in his tail.

And be very careful of one thing. Kill any fish of over 1 lb. weight before trying to extract your hooks, especially if they are treble ones, as very nasty accidents have occurred through the fish plunging, and the hooker becoming the hooked.

There are more ways than one of killing a fish. If a few smart blows on the head have no effect, thump the fish vigorously with your fist in the middle, having first laid him out flat. This will burst his bladder. With small fish squeeze them in the middle, or flip on the head with your finger.

And now there will be some I'm sure who will say, "But he never tells us whether the fish are good to eat or not"! Well, one.

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doesn't go tiger shooting or pigsticking with a view to a meal in one's head, nor ought one to go fishing in such a manner. But certainly it is a great thing to feel that one's captures are some use after death. You don't get a skin or a pair of tusks as trophies off a fish.

Well, first you can rest assured that your servants and camp followers will eat all and any fish you may give them.

Mahomedans will eat fish too, without the necessity of "halal karoing" it. They say Allah has already "halal kiya" fish, referring to their gill openings.

As regards the fish for one's own table, so much depends on (i) the species of fish; (ii) their size; (iii) the water you catch them in; (iv) their condition; (v) their cooking, and last, but not least, what sauce in the way of hunger you can bring to bear on them.

Personally I do not think the Indian fish (excluding Seer, Pomfret, and one or two other sea fish) come up to their confréres at home, like the Salmon, Trout, Sole, etc:

Batchwa are very good to eat, so are Barilius Bola; and Chilwa, if caught in running water. Murral are just like Pike, and want to be full of stuffing. The Indian Gudgeon is said to be nice: he doesn't look it!

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Mahseer depend very much on the river, they are best to eat when weighing between 3 and 8 lbs., below 3 they are too bony, and above 8 they get coarse. Some turtles are good to eat, some are not. *Experientia docet.*

For such of my readers who may be absolute novices, I may mention that most fishes are possessed of five fins, or pairs of fins, *i.e.*, 1 Dorsal fin (on back) 1 Caudal fin (or tail) 2 Pectoral fins (on breast), and a Ventral and Anal fin underneath. In some fishes, such as Wallago Attu the two latter fins are merged in one.

Then most fishes have a lateral line running from the gills to the tail, on each side of their bodies, in some fish, especially scaleless ones, this line is much more clearly defined than in others.

And let me say a word here against selfishness in fishermen, I mean in the matter of keeping pet places dark. This, I think, is quite legitimate in the way of shooting, where perhaps your place if made public is visited just before your leave, by two or three so-called sportsmen who slaughter every thing they see, and ruin that place for the year, or perhaps for several years. But fishing is

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different, new fish come up every year; and out here there are not nearly enough anglers to overcrowd the good waters. "Do unto others as you would be done by." Tell about the good places you know, and then when you are transferred, others will tell you of good spots near your new station.

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CHAPTER XII.

TACKLE.

AND now a few words as to tackle. Of course opinion is found to differ a great deal on many points. A man who has killed lots of fish on a 2-inch spoon will swear by that; another man may say he has always found a 1-inch best.

The size of the river, nature and weight of the fish, rapidity of current; various things may all help to determine the tackle you will use. And remember, too, in this little book I am not talking of fish over 10 or 12 lbs. as a rule. Not many beginners in Indian fishing are likely to start their fishing with catching 30 or 40-pounders; should they, however, be so lucky as to get the chance, they would be pretty certain to have a mentor with them, whose presence would enable them to dispense with the services of this humble volume.

Of course some men after they have fished and made bags of the smaller fish, will aspire to visit the haunts of the large fish, and catch them likewise, but by the time they start to tackle the monsters they will

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have pretty fixed ideas of their own about rods, lines, etc. And so to business.

ROD.

Your first consideration will be your rod. If you are lucky enough to be blessed with the goods of this world, more than most of us exiles are, go to a good maker and get a steel-centred rod with lock-fast joints.

Anyway get the best rod that you can afford, remember that on it may depend to a great extent whether your trip is a success or a ghastly failure. Lock-fast joints you will find are well worth the extra that you may pay for them.

As to length—please yourself as to a 14 or 16-foot rod. I would not recommend heavier than that. Remember that in India you are often fishing in the heat of the day, and to be able to wield one's rod with comfort is a great consideration. And then on a lighter rod one can use so much lighter tackle.

Personally I would far rather take 15 minutes to land a game 10-pounder with light tackle on a 14-foot rod, than I would to land the same fish in 10 minutes on a 16-foot rod. Always have a spare top to your rod, and also get a short stiff spinning-top as well, for use when fishing for Goonch or other such fish. Whenever possible, though,

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use the fly top to your rod; you put less strain on your trace collar, and you will find it far pleasanter for playing the fish. And a pliant top acts as a sort of cushion to any jerks or plunges the fish may make.

REEL.

With regard to winches or reels, use the smallest one consistent with the amount of line you wish to use. Three to three and a half inches are quite big enough for a 14-foot rod with ordinary fish. Get one with a good check, and the handle let in to the revolving plate.

LINE.

As to line. There is such a large number of good lines in the market that it is hard to advise any particular kind. Deal with a good maker and get both your line for fly and for spinning equal in thickness to light to medium salmon. The Manchester spinning line sign 64 is good and strong enough for any fish.

You will never want more than 100 yards, and 150 yards ought to be ample even for the biggest fish; and if expense is a consideration, have only 30 yards of running line, and the rest good, strong, backing line.

Always—the following is most important—dry your line before putting it away,

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unreel all the wet portion, and stretch it out across two chairs, or in any other way convenient. If you do not do this your line will quickly rot, and the first good-sized fish your get on will promptly break you.

CASTS AND TRACES.

For casts and traces use light salmon or lake trout for Mahseer, stout trout for Carnatic Carp and fine trout for lesser fly-takers.

If there is a chance of bigger fish use Hercules wire traces, and use these in any case for Murral, Bāmin, Nair fish or any of the Siluroids.

Two yards is a good length for traces, with two swivels, or, better still, one double swivel near the bait end, and a single at the other. Remember always to soak your gut well before using. This is a necessary precaution in England, and in this country the necessity is far greater.

Always test your casts and traces—after soaking—before using, it is better to break on the bank where you can repair them, than to see the fish of the day going off with a pet spoon and half your trace.

SWIVELS.

German silver swivels are the best. Always have a certain number of double swivels, and a few buckle swivels are useful. These latter

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are very handy for the end of one's trace, as they obviate the trouble of passing the spoon through a loop on the trace, or, if using dead bait, they enable one to change to a new flight rapidly.

SPLIT RINGS.

Split rings are things to be avoided; they appear to be made only for ornament, not use. If you buy your spoons and phantoms ready-made see that they are mounted on solid rings.

If you make up your own, use brass wire to fasten your swivels and hooks to the spoons or phantoms. It is a little difficult to mount them neatly at first, but a little practice and a pair of pliers will make you pretty handy at it soon. And do not worry about being too neat. I know this sounds heresy, but when your spoon or phantom is spinning in a rapid, and making a small race of its own, and fish are hungry, they won't, as a rule, detect the difference between a bit of brass wire and a split ring!

SPOONS.

Of spoons there are various shapes, please yourself. Plate XXII, figs. 1 and 2 show two different spoons; the former mounted with head and tail hooks, and the latter with the flying mount, so popular in the Punjaub. For my own part, I generally mount all my

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Plate XXII.

FIG. 1

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

FIG. 4

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spoons up to 2" with the flying mount, over 2" with head and tail triangles. The flying mount can be varied with 2 single hooks, or a good combination is a single hook at the top and a triangle at bottom. The two spoons are simply drawn different shapes to show variations, both spin well if properly mounted. And now a word as to mounting; be careful if making up your own spoons not to use too big and too heavy hooks. If you find that your spoon does not spin true, the chances will be that your hooks are too heavy for it.

For mounting spoons the following sizes of hooks and swivels may be taken as a rough guide: For large spoons, say over 3", use No. 4 swivels, for all others No. 5 should suffice, and use a double swivel if the spoon is of fair size and weight.

As regards triangles, for a 1" spoon use, say, No. 12 as your top hook and No. 11 at bottom. For a 2" spoon No. 6 at top and No. 5 at bottom, and for a 3" spoon No. 3 at top and No. 2 at bottom. And remember always the finer you fish the better.

A spoon is a very slippery bait, and once a fish dashes at a spoon, the chances are he hooks himself.

Avoid, with all baits, using formidable arrays of hooks. Indian waters are very bright

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and clear, remember; and also the bigger Carps, like Mahseer, have leathery mouths giving excellent hook-hold. With others of the predacious fishes which have mouths full of teeth, you can generally add an extra treble to phantoms and dead baits.

Spoons are expensive things to buy, so I always make my own. Buy a sheet of brass in the bazaar (you can get a large enough piece for 4 annas to make about 20 1-inch spoons). Give any blacksmith a pattern and he will cut you out two or three dozen in an hour. Go to any big shop that does silver-plating or nickel-plating and ask if they will plate them for you. I get mine done for about Re. 1 per dozen, one side bright and the other dulled. The dull side you can leave as it is, or have burnished up, or paint with gold paint and varnish. There you have your spoon. Mount it with solid trebles and a good swivel. Fasten your treble and swivel on with brass wire. The whole spoon (according to size) can be made for from 6 to 12 annas.

And personally I have found them just as effective as shop-made ones. In one pool in which I caught over 10 Mahseer in a day, I tried, as an experiment, using different spoons —(i) a shop one beautiful to look at—gilt and

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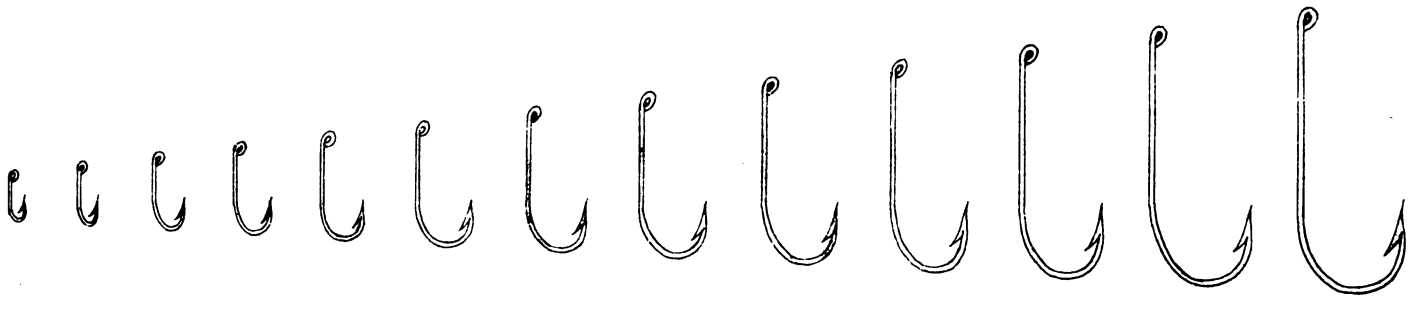
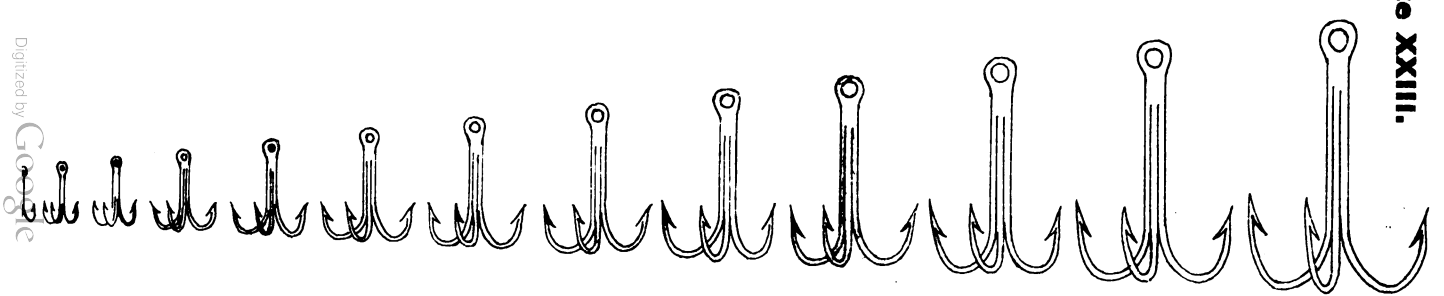


20 17 14 10 8 6 5 4 3 2 1 1/0 2/0

EYED LIMERICK HOOKS.

(Smaller intermediate sizes omitted to save space.)

Plate XXIII.



) 17 14 10 8 6 5 4 3 2 1 1/0 2/0

EYED TREBLE HOOKS.

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silver, (ii) a shop one all silver, (iii) a silvered one of my own, (iv) one cut out of the lid of a biscut tin, and (v) a plain brass one polished bright, and as far as catching fish was concerned, there seemed not the slightest difference in any of them.

HOOKS.

Then as regards hooks. Get good stout treble hooks. Most makers at home know now what Mahseer hooks are. They may strike you as clumsy at first, but wait till you get a spoon back all crumpled up, with the hooks gone to glory, then you realize the enormous powers of compression that a Mahseer's jaws have. Use eyed hooks whenever possible in India. The binding on hooks mounted to gut dries very quickly in this country, and you will find you lose many fish in this way. Remember in writing for hooks, always draw a sample hook to show size wanted. There are different scales of hooks, and trouble and disappointment are liable to occur if you do not carefully specify exactly what you want. The scales I give you (Plate XXIII) are the same as laid down in "The Rod in India." I choose those scales purposely as they are probably better known to Indian anglers than any other scales. If fishing with float and worm, eyed hooks are

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not so good, as the worm will not pass over the eye without tearing.

FLOATS.

As regards floats. For live-baiting for Murral, use an ordinary egg-shaped float, as one uses for Pike at home. For any other float-fishing, let me commend to your notice the excellent little floats invented by Mr. Thomas, and called "Detective" or "Labeo" floats. They are very easy to make. Take one of a peacock's tail feathers—you can buy them in any bazaar—and cut off the last 4 inches of thick quill. Then take off the next 6 inches and carefully snip the harl away from this. Here is the float. To make it up for use—varnish it, paint 3 bands of red, ½ an inch broad each, alternating with ½ inch bands of natural colour, starting from one end. At the other end bind on with waxed silk a small loop of stout running line, and your float is complete. (Plate XXIV, Fig. 1.)

To fix it on your line. Make a loop in your running line, and pass it through loop on float, pull sufficient through to pass over top of float, and then pull the running line taut again, and your float is on. A little persuasion is all that is necessary to slip it up or down till you have it at the right depth. The great advantage of these floats is that your

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running line is only fastened to one end, so that they are much more sensitive to the smallest bite. Also you can put them on or take them off easily, no untying of collar, or bothering with small float caps.

LEADS.

Next as to weighting your line. If you simply want a sinker for live-baiting use a conical 12-bore bullet, as you cannot have anything better than that. If for trolling,—there are various kinds made. Look up in any maker's catalogue and choose for yourself. The *Fishing Gazette* leads are very good ones.

For ordinary spinning or float-fishing very useful leads are the Simplex leads made in assorted sizes by Hardy Bros. and which are easily put on or taken off your trace or cast. And if going on a fishing trip, I should advise you to take some soft lead wire, as this is excellent for making up weights, either after approved patterns, or to suit your own devices.

PHANTOMS, Etc.

Minnows, phantoms, etc. You will want a certain number of these; 3 or 4 inches are good sizes, as you can use these without straining your fly top. Personally I always remove one treble hook from each, you do not need more than 2 trebles; at any rate not for

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Mahseer, though, as I mentioned before, if you are after any fish whose mouths are full of teeth, you can leave the extra treble on.

MOUNTING BAITS.

To mount dead or live bait. There are many and various devices for the former, all of which have the advantage of enabling you to mount your bait quickly. But in my opinion most of them are too formidable, and if you are using a small fish as bait, there seems to be too much frame-work and too little fish.

Plate XXII, Fig. 4 shows perhaps one of the neatest spinners—the Coxon. The figure explains itself, except that the leaded spike is of soft metal, and after insertion the bait can be bent to take any curve required.

If you will be content to take a little time mounting your bait, the neatest and most effective way is as follows (Fig. 3, Plate XXIV): Take a good-sized treble hook and mount it by binding without knots—on a snood of stout gut or Hercules wire of 1 ft. in length. Make the usual loop at the other end, also by binding. Then ship the loop through the eye of a baiting needle, so that you have your snood threaded on the needle. Pass the needle in at the anus and out through the mouth of your bait, and draw the collar through carefully till you have the shank and one point

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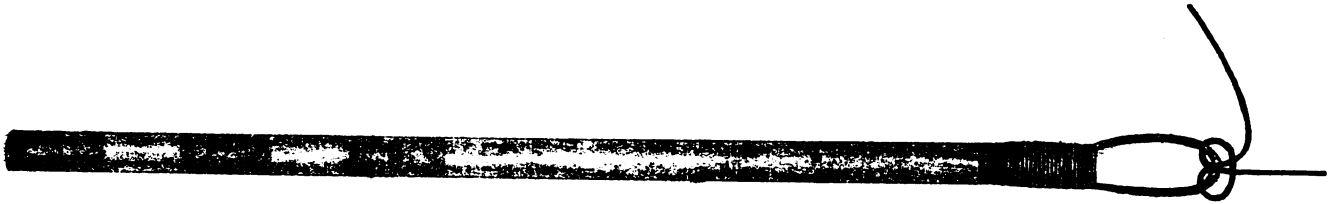

FIG. 1

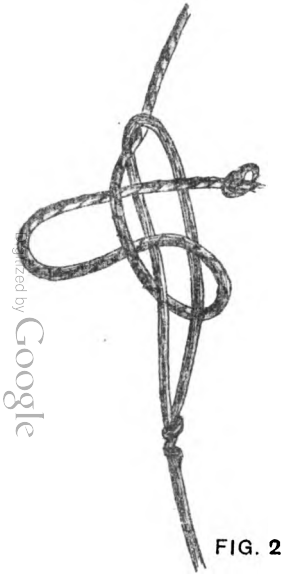

FIG. 2

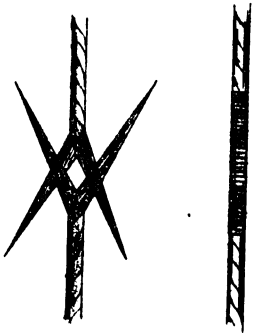

FIG. 3

Plate XXIV.

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of the treble hook embedded in the fish. Then remove the needle.

If you want to fish deep you must weight your bait. The best way of doing this is to use a minnow mouth lead. Failing one of these, put as much lead as possible in the bait's mouth, and shut the mouth with a thorn or small pin. If more weight than this is necessary, you must lead your line at 18 inches or 2 feet away from the bait, but the disadvantage of this is that it makes it more difficult to cast neatly and effectively. When using a bait mounted like this it is an advantage to have a buckle swivel at the end of one's trace.

A good live bait flight (as mentioned in the Chapter on Mahseer) is made as follows (Fig 3, Plate XXII): mount a single hook on a stout collar of gut 2 feet long. Then prepare your lip hook. Take an eyed hook and bind with waxed silk a very small loop of gut on the shank, so fixed as to lie on the back of the shank, away from and opposite the bait.

Then take your collar with the mounted hook and pass the free end through the loop on lip-hook, take two turns round the shank of lip-hook and then pass out through the eye. Finish off your collar with a loop as in an

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ordinary collar. Now you will find by a little manipulation you can move the lip-hook up or down, though it will not slip from any direct strain. Fix your body hook first, as per illustration, and then having adjusted your lip-hook so that the bait will not be curved, pass the bait gently through the upper lip of your bait. And your flight is ready for use.

KNOTS.

Perhaps the most generally useful knot for fastening the running line to trace or cast is as shown in Fig. 2, Plate XXIV.

REQUISITES.

If going on a trip, or anywhere away from the shops, you will find all or any of the following things useful:—

Cobbler's wax.

Thin silk for fine work in whipping and binding.

Stout silk for repairs to rods, etc.

Some copper wire.

A bottle of shellac varnish (thin).

One or two good pairs of pliers (with wire cutter combined).

A good pair of scissors.

A small tube (oil) of red paint for floats, etc.

A piece of emery paper.

Some brass wire (one or two coils of varying thickness).

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A good knife with disgorger, fly tying pliers, scissors, etc.

Several spare hooks of assorted sizes.

Several swivels.

Several snake rings, or best of all "Bridge" rings.

A small quantity of mercury, and a couple of lemons (for use as mentioned later on).

Did I mention how much line you should have on your reel? I believe I did, anyhow here it is again.

Generally, if you do not expect fish of over 10 lbs., 75 yards should be enough, but have 100 yards to be safe. This allows of spinning from a boat with 50 yards out, and plenty to spare if the fish rushes down the pool. In any case 150 yards should be enough for any fish. He must be a monster, or the water must be very much against you, if you cannot stop or turn a fish with that amount on your reel.

Should he run out all your line lower your point and hold on, its the final tug; he may break you, if he doesn't you may consider him yours.

Personally I would advise you to order your tackle out from home, as it comes far cheaper in the end. Deal with some good

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shop and stick to it. It is perhaps invidious to say any are better than others. One whom I deal with and always found satisfactory is—

Hardy Bros., of Alnwick.

But

Farlow, The Strand.
Carter & Co., Islington.
Little, of Haymarket.
Alcock, of Redditch.
Mallock, of Perth

are all well known shops.

Out in this country there are several shops who supply tackle; notably—

Luscombe, of Allahabad.
Manton, of Calcutta.
Oakes & Co., Ld., of Madras.
Scott, of Pindi.
Biswas, of Calcutta. (now called Calcutta Armoury Company.)
Rodda, of Calcutta.
Murray, of Naini Tal, and Treacher, of Bombay.

And remember always buy *good* tackle, it does *not* pay buying cheap hooks, swivels, gut, etc. If you really fish to catch fish, it is worth doing the thing well.

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CHAPTER XIII.

USEFUL HINTS.

A VERY good running ring for the top of your rod can be made of a good stout piece of brass wire. Take two turns round a pencil, and cut off the ends level, and there you have your ring.

Occasionally if you have had bad luck you may find yourself running out of spoons, and will then have to make up some as best you can out of materials available. Do not use all the spoons out of your tiffin basket, as one man did. He caught something besides fish when he got home, and his wife found out. Hammer them out of any piece of tin or brass available, and then silver them over. This you can do very well for temporary use by means of the quicksilver and lemon mentioned before. You can buy the former in most bazaars in India; it is generally sold in a small nut-shell, the hole stopped up with wax.

Squeeze a few drops of lemon into a saucer and then pour in a small amount of mercury. Wet the spoon with lemon juice, and rub in mercury with your finger till it "takes."

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Make as thick a coating as you like, and then dry the spoon on a piece of rag and polish with chamois leather. This is an excellent makeshift in the way of silver-plating, only it tarnishes and wears off after a time. Remember when you are using mercury to remove any gold ring you may be wearing, as mercury tarnishes gold.

To prevent hooks, etc., rusting, a good plan is to dip them into thin shellac varnish, and then hang them on a string to dry.

Always hang your rods up on a dry wall in their covers in preference to leaving them about leaning in corners. Do not tie the covers up too tightly.

See that your reel runs freely, and that the screws are all tight before starting fishing.

To use your landing net, place a small stone in it to sink the bag, and when you have got the fish in it do not try to lift him out or you will strain your ring. Pull him up with the handle more or less perpendicular.

The Gaff.—How to use a gaff? is a question some novices may ask. You will very seldom

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want a gaff with Mahseer. It is much better if you can play your fish into shallow water, to let one of your attendants get behind the fish and lift him out by the gills. But there may be occasions, such as playing a big fish from a boat, when you must use a gaff. In a case of this sort remember that a Mahseer's scales make him like an armour-plated cruiser, and that if you try to gaff him in the side, in eight cases out of ten, the point will fail to penetrate. Get the gaff well below him and, with a sharp jerk, pull it into the fish's belly.

In walking with your rod put together remember always to have the butt to the front (except going through jungle), if you then trip and fall, your rod may escape damage. If carrying it the other way, your top is almost certain to go to glory.

If you catch a tree, or a rock in the river, lower your rod and pull from the reel; if something has to go, better a hook or your collar than the rod top. Don't try switching with the rod, the strain put on the top is immense.

Splicing Lines.—Many men think that if they break or cut their running line they have

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spoilt it altogether. But you can splice it just as strong as it was before, as follows: Carefully unpick with a pin the last ½ inch of both ends. Brush the strands out fine. Then wet and roll the strands with your finger so that there are two ½ inch points to each end. Place the 4 points together—the illustration (Fig. 3, Plate XXIV) will explain better than words—roll neatly, and then bind tightly with well-waxed silk, and finally put a coat of varnish on.

Line Dressing.—Take 2 pints linseed oil, ½ lb. of beeswax and 2 oz. of India rubber cut up fine.

Boil this mixture, stir well, and allow to cool slightly. It smells. When still warm, place your line in it to soak for some time. Then take out and pull it through your fingers, carefully taking off all surplus oil. Then hang out to dry. This drying will take at least a fortnight, so you must dress your lines at some time when you will not need to use them. Keep the mixture for future use in a tightly-stoppered bottle. This mixture is also very useful for touching up canvas boats if they leak. Brush it on well with a fair-sized brush. If there is any hurry for your line or boat, you can add a certain propor-

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tion of "litharge" (say 12 ozs.) to the above mixture; this makes it dry very quickly.

If float-fishing, you will very often find that there is too much wind for you to see your float. The natives have a very neat way of getting over this difficulty, and one which we can adapt to our rods and lines as follows: Take a very thin length of bamboo 3 feet long, at the thicker end bind on a small snake ring, or a loop, as on the detective float.

Then fix up your rod and line as for ordinary fishing and lay it beside you on the bank. Before fastening the gut cast to running line, however, pass the end through the loop on bamboo, and then tie as usual. Leave your rod lying on the bank, and take the thin bamboo as if it was a small rod, and having plumbed the depth carefully so that the bait just rests on the bottom, take two turns of the gut round the very fine end of bamboo, and with your finger hold the gut steady where it passes through the loop at the thicker end. You are now holding your float,—or rather its equivalent—in your hand.

Watch the very fine point of the bamboo, and by any jerks or twitches it receives you will know of bites below. Strike hard, and with the whole arm. The fine bamboo will

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only bend not break. If you get into a fish, let go your bamboo, and take up your rod to play him. The two turns which you took with the gut round the bamboo point will unwind themselves, and the loop on the other end being large enough for the gut to pass through, the bamboo will slip down and not interfere with the reeling in of the fish. This method of fishing is only recommended when the waves are such as to make float-fishing quite hopeless.

Ground-Bait.—In all float-fishing one of the simplest and best ground-baits to use is "Bran." Soak a little till thoroughly wet, and then throw it around your float. It will sink immediately.

If you are hard up for gut; buy some of the Bainy fibre (called Tungoos in South India) which the native fishermen use. It is very cheap and very strong, and seems less easily cut through than gut. It is extremely brittle, however, when dry, and wants to be soaked for several hours before knotting or bending it.

Some men say that it is a pity fishes don't give trophies, like horns, claws, etc. Well, you can get one or two trophies from big fish.

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The gill plates of a large Mahseer can be made up into Menu-cards, or memo. tablets, as pencil marks on them will wash off quite easily.

The large teeth in the throats of bigger Carp make quaint paper weights.

Cut off the tails of big fish, pin out till dry, varnish well and mount on a board, and they make quite nice trophies to remind you of by-gone battles.

Or stuff a fish. This is rather a business, and I would refer you to the instructions laid down in that excellent book "The Rod in India."

And keep a diary on your trips, both fishing and shooting. It is always interesting to refer to, and it is a pleasure to write up after a real good day; while, after a real bad day, well, there is nothing to write. The following form is recommended :—

Date.	Place.	Species.	Weight.	Bait	Remarks.
02) March 20th.	Tangrot.	Mahseer.	21 lbs 12½ lbs.	Silver spoon.	No. 1. (Ct. 2nd cast in the Chukker.) Day bright, water, slightly coloured.

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In the Remarks column enter any details that may be of interest, such as weather, state of water, time he took to land, male or female, etc., etc.

For weighing fish a Salter's spring balance is useful, and some fishing knives have spring balances weighing up to 20 lbs. fitted in them. Say, you catch a 30-lb. fish and have a balance only weighing to 20 lbs. Take the handle of your gaff or landing net, and having passed a stout cord though the gills of your fish hang him exactly in the middle of the stick. Make two loops of string, and fasten at each end of stick, make an attendant hold up one loop, and lift other with your balance. Double what it shows. In this case with a 30-lb. fish, it would read 15 lbs.

As to the time of year to fish. This so much depends on the river, etc. In the North one may take it that October, November; and then March and April are the best general months, though some rivers give good sport in January, February and December.

In South India from the end of September to the end of April. All these months are good for fishing, except just during December or January rains, but these are uncertain, so you must chance them.

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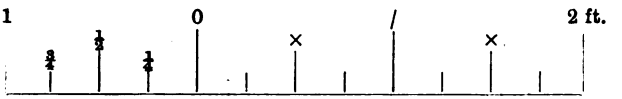
I have heard of places good for Mahseer even in July and August, but they are difficult to get at, and you must make up your mind to continuous rain.

A good idea is to cut in a scale as follows on your gaff, or landing net handle. It comes in useful for measuring fish.



And just a word as to your boots. If you get them very wet, do not let your servants put them in the sun to dry, just as they are, or they will get hard and crack. But have mutton fat or other grease well rubbed in, and then put in the sun, when they will dry nice and soft.

Remember if you get your hands very stained with cobbler's wax, or waterproofing mixture; ordinary kerosine oil will take it off quite easily.

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CHAPTER XIV.

DESTRUCTION OF FISH IN INDIA.

JUST a few words in conclusion on the immense destruction of fish and fry in India. Perhaps this matter is one rather outside the scope of a little book like this, but it is a subject of such importance that it behoves every angler to lay it to heart, and to do his best towards remedying the evil if ever he gets the chance.

Of late years a certain amount has been done to remedy the evil. In 1897, I believe, a Fisheries Act was passed, and in 1902 Mysore brought out new game laws, which afforded protection to the fish as well.

But all these laws are carried out half-heartedly all over India, except in a few fortunate districts where the Civilian in charge, or the Police Superintendents happen to be keen sportsmen.

The netting and poaching in many rivers is so great, as to make it a wonder that any fish survive at all. It is no exaggeration, though, to say that in many rivers the supply of fish has decreased 60% in the last 25 years.

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It is not only from an angler's point of view that the matter should be looked at; it is more or less a matter of national importance to India.

In the great rivers we have a food-supply which, if properly looked after, might be the saving of literally lakhs of lives in a big famine.

And out here we have not the sea to fall back on, as we have at home, as a protected area for our river fish. None of the bigger Carps, like the Mahseer, go out to sea yearly as do the Salmon. And the Indian rivers unfortunately lend themselves so easily to poaching. Regularly every year the rivers are swollen by monsoon rains, and the big fish take the opportunity to ascend and lay their eggs in the upper reaches, so that when their fry are hatched they may find the waters more suited to their puny size than the heavier waters of the rivers lower down. Then when the floods begin to subside the larger fish begin to drop down the river, followed by the smaller fish, till the upper waters are left to small fishes and fry.

It is during this annual descent that the greatest destruction of fish occurs. The instinct of all Indian fish is intensely migratory, and as soon as the fry hatched out in the

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upper waters get to any size, they too follow their parents down the river in search of pastures new and more food. Then in every spot where the river can be damned into two or three channels, are set traps of sorts, and every little runnel into paddy or other fields is made as the broad and easy way which leadest to destruction, into a basket trap where it makes its first drop to a lower level. You will say, "how, then, is it any fish survive?" And very few fish would survive, if Indian fish spawned like the English fish, getting rid of their eggs all at the same time.

But the bigger Carp, like the Mahseer, spawn two or three distinct times in the year, so that it follows that many of the larger fish will spawn in the lower reaches of the river, when there is very little water comparatively, taking advantage of runs and rapids into pools to lay their eggs in the shallow water at the head or tail of the run. Thus many fry are born in pools which are too deep and large to be netted or poached (always provided that they are not poisoned, though this luckily has been to a great extent put a stop to in the last few years); and these are the fry which maintain a certain population of fish in the rivers.

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Well, enough of this subject now. I can only hope that should any of my readers attain to such felicitous positions as Viceroy, Governors or Commissioners, they will then exert their influence in behalf of any fish that may be left alive in our Indian waters.

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